

## Fight Inhumane Animal Testing

A kitten stumbles; its eyelids sewn shut to study blindness. Acids drip into and scorch the fur of confined rabbits. A lone dog howls; open flesh exposed to unseeing eyes. A cat lies on the operating table with a microchip protruding from its head. Primates, injected with some form of human disease, cower in their cages, human-like hopelessness in their eyes; the only sense of acknowledgement is the scarring numbers etched across their chests. Even with modern technologies, highly inhumane animal testing and biomedical research still persists in many avenues in which such cruel experiments are often unnecessary.

Over the years our society has become increasingly revolved around consumerism and products are continuously being developed. But what happens behind the scenes? Who proved that it wasn't safe to put bleach in your eyes or that chemicals in cosmetics are nontoxic to humans or that new food alternatives and health supplements are safe? They did. The innocent.

The British Union for the Abolition of vivisection estimates that 100 million vertebrates are experimented on around the world each year. In the US alone, animal welfare organizations estimate that close to 120,000 primates are used in laboratories.

In Canada, according to the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC), 4,363 primates, along with almost 10,000 dogs, over 116,000 domestic birds, 82,000 farm animals, and many others, make up the over 2.5 million animals that were used in various laboratories in Canada in 2006, an increase of 8.7% over 2005. CCAC figures also show that close to 1 million of these animals suffered 'moderate to severe distress or discomfort' or 'severe pain, at or above the pain tolerance threshold of un-anaesthetized conscious animals'.

Arm and Hammer, Oral-B, Johnson & Johnson, Estee Lauder and Colgate-Palmolive, make up a small portion of the companies using animal testing. In fact, I requested information from Clorox on this pressing issue and in their response they confirmed, "Information from these tests is... used to write accurate warnings, first-aid statements and instructions for consumers to guide them in the proper use of our products." Could we not figure this out on our own? Is wearing cosmetics or having new cleaning products really worth an animal being tortured?

Many universities use animal testing to provide hands-on education and for research. And the money to pay for much of this comes out of taxpayers' pockets. In a phone conversation with Justin Goodman of the Animal Liberation Front, Goodman stated, "Don't let anyone tell you it isn't about money. In the U.S., the federal government funds twelve billion dollars annually, with over 20 colleges and universities receiving well over 100 million dollars." It often pays for the same experiment to be done over and over again.

In private research facilities, Covance and Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) are two of the worst offenders. In the past ten years HLS has been exposed four times for vicious animal cruelty. And vivisection, the process of cutting open a live animal, is still commonplace. Animal research also fuels the trade of wildlife.

When animals are used in biomedical research to try and develop medicines and other ways of preventing or curing diseases in humans, many people raise the question, "If not them – then who?", and it is a valid point. However, it has been proven, and many agree, that animals are too different and we could gain inaccurate results by testing on them and relating that to human medical issues. In fact, many people die each year due to drugs that were tested safe on animals, but proved to be fatal to humans. As Dr. Kenneth Starr of the New South Wales Cancer Council says, "It is not possible to apply to the human species experimental information derived from inducing cancers in animals."

However, there have been some victories. PETA and other animal rights organizations have successfully campaigned to have companies like POM stop continuing or funding tests on animals. As well, there are a few organizations, such as the Fauna Foundation's 'Adopt A Chimp' program, that are providing comfort and rehabilitation to some of these animals. The chimps in this foundation have been subject to anything from liver biopsies to experimental HIV drugs.

One can make a difference and help stop animal testing every single day. Buy products that explicitly state that they are not tested on animals. Take the time to read the small print on the back of the bottle or look for the rabbit logo. Inform others. Write letters – to universities, and companies that experiment on animals. Protest. Donate only to health charities that never fund animal experiments. Boycott IAMS and other pet food companies that conduct research on animals.

Now the question is – if animal testing was performed in a more humane manner, if the animals were handled with care, and animal enrichment programs were offered, would it be right? As author and Professor Charles R. Magel puts it, "Ask the experimenters why they experiment on animals, and the answer is: 'Because the animals are like us.' Ask the experimenters why it is morally OK to experiment on animals, and the answer is: 'Because the animals are not like us.' Animal experimentation rests on a logical contradiction'."