

# Cosmetics Testing

**E**VERY YEAR thousands of animals are used in experiments to test cosmetics and toiletries. To help us look and feel more attractive, and to help them make more profits, manufacturers constantly launch new products on to the market – longer-lasting lipstick, super-strength conditioners and wrinkle-busting moisturisers. Most of them will have been cruelly and unnecessarily tested on animals.

## Why are cosmetics tested on animals?

At present the law doesn't say that cosmetics have to be tested on animals, only that companies must ensure that their products are safe for people to use and that they do not harm the environment.

Since 1998 the British government has not issued licences for testing cosmetics ingredients and products on animals in the UK. However, products that have been tested on animals in other countries can still be sold here, and when British manufacturers want to develop new

products they simply do their animal testing abroad.

The European Commission has now proposed an EU-wide ban on the testing of finished cosmetic products in 2006, followed by a ban on cosmetic ingredients testing in 2009. The ingredients ban however could be delayed (possibly indefinitely), by using the excuse that alternative non-animal testing methods have not been developed.



## What kinds of tests are done?

### Eye Irritancy Tests

During the Draize eye test a substance is dripped into the eyes of animals to see if it causes any irritation or damage. Albino rabbits are usually used because they have large eyes and poor tear ducts, which means that they can't wash away the test substance. This test can cause great pain and suffering - the eyes can become inflamed and permanently damaged. Pain relief is rarely given during the test, which can last for several days.

### Skin Tests

These experiments test for skin irritation, allergic reaction, photo-toxicity (light-sensitive reaction) and skin absorption. They involve shaving and scratching an area of the animal's skin before rubbing on the test substance. Guinea pigs, or rabbits are usually used. The animals are observed for any symptoms of poisoning or sensitivity, such as reddening, swelling, cracking, bleeding or ulceration of the skin. The test lasts for several days and pain relief is almost never given.

### Toxicity tests

In these poisoning tests a substance is added to the food or water, or is force-fed to animals directly into their stomach. After they have been dosed with the substance, the animals are watched for any symptoms of poisoning, such as tremors, bleeding or vomiting. The tests may last for many days or months. Any animals who do not die of poisoning during the experiment are killed and autopsied (examined). These tests are usually conducted on rats and mice.



**Bad Science**  
Doing these cruel tests doesn't mean you can be sure that the products are safe for people to use. The effects substances have on animals is often very different from the effects they have on humans. For example, bleach only causes mild irritation to rabbit skin, but severe irritation to human skin.



## What's the alternative?

Lots of companies already manufacture cosmetics and toiletries without testing them on animals. They produce cruelty-free products by using mild and natural ingredients that are known to be safe, because they have been used by people for many years. With 8,000 such ingredients in

existence, there is no need to create new ones and then test them on animals.

As long as companies insist on producing new 'improved' ingredients for cosmetics there will be a need to test them for safety. The answer is to replace animal tests with

humane methods. In fact, there already exist various computer models and tests involving the use of human tissue or cell cultures, which could replace all the standard animal tests. Because they are based on human data, they also provide much more reliable results.



# Guide to Cruelty-free Shopping



The best way to encourage manufacturers to change their policies on animal testing is to use your consumer power. By boycotting companies that continue to test on animals and only buying 'cruelty-free'

non-animal tested products, you can help change things. The trouble is, buying cruelty-free isn't always straight forward, as some of the labels put on products by companies can be rather confusing and misleading.

## The main cruelty-free policies are:

### BEWARE IF THE LABEL SAYS:

'Not tested on animals'  
The product may not have been tested on animals, but the ingredients may have been. In fact, most animal testing is for ingredients and not finished products.

'Against animal testing'  
A nice statement in theory, but it doesn't really mean anything.

'We don't test our products or ingredients on animals'  
The product and/or ingredients may have been tested on animals by someone else.

'Contains only natural ingredients'

'Natural' or not, they may have been tested on animals. Even 'green' or 'environmentally friendly' products may have been tested on animals.

### Fixed cut-off date

Ethical companies use a fixed cut-off date, which means the company's products and ingredients have not been tested on animals after a specific date. Some ingredients may have been tested before this cut-off date (practically everything has been tested on animals at some point, even water). But the company is not supporting animal testing that has taken place since. The cut-off date varies between different companies - obviously the longer ago the 'cut-off' date, the better.

### 5 year rule

This is a half-hearted policy which means the company will not use ingredients that have been tested on animals in the last five years. However, if the ingredients were tested longer ago than that, the company will accept them. As it can take around five years for a newly developed ingredient to become available for use in products anyway, then this policy on its own will do little to end animal testing. After all, an ingredient being tested on animals today could be used by a manufacturer in five years' time.



The best thing is to look for the BUAV's\* **Humane Cosmetics Standard** bunny symbol, which



guarantees that neither the ingredients, nor the finished product, have been tested on animals after a certain fixed cut off date. It doesn't guarantee that the products are free from animal ingredients (see below). For an up-to-date list of companies that conform to this standard, see the website: [www.buav.org/gocrueltyfree](http://www.buav.org/gocrueltyfree) or contact BUAV to order a free booklet.

\*British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection

## Things to do:

- Contact Animal Aid for a Product Testing Action Pack
- Always buy cruelty-free. Check the labels on the cosmetics products you buy. Look for the Humane Cosmetics Standard bunny logo. Remember, most of the cosmetics and toiletry products in the shops will have been animal tested and nearly all the big companies still do animal testing.
- Animal Aid sell a range of cruelty-free toiletries. See the shop on our website or contact us for a free merchandise catalogue.
- Write to cosmetics companies that still test (contact Animal Aid for a list of addresses). Ask for clarification of their testing policy and say that you will boycott their products until they conform to the Humane Cosmetics Standard.

## Some of the companies that conform to the Humane Cosmetics Standard:

Body Shop  
Co-op (own brand)  
Faith in Nature  
Honesty  
John Paul Mitchell Systems

Kiss My Face  
Montagne Jeunesse  
Safeway (own brand)  
Sainsbury's (own brand)  
Suma (own label)

## BEWARE OF ANIMAL INGREDIENTS

Lots of cosmetics and toiletries contain animal ingredients and slaughterhouse by-products. Soaps and creams are often made with animal fats such as **tallow**. Lipsticks may contain **lanolin** (a grease derived from wool) or **beeswax**. **Keratin** (derived from hair, horn, hoof and feathers) may be used in shampoos, conditioners and skin care products.

**Gelatine** (from animal bones, skin and hide) and **elastin** (from meat) may be found in other products. **Shellac** (crushed insects) may be used in nail varnish.

For a comprehensive list of products that are animal free, see the Animal Free Shopper guide, which costs £4.99 and is available from Animal Aid.