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Alternatives to Animal Testing

If you need more of your Cover Girl make-up, perhaps while you are at the store purchasing it, you can pick up some Arm & Hammer for the fridge and Scotch tape for an upcoming project. Like countless people, you fail to think about how this product came to be or if there was animal testing involved. Many people are unaware of the appalling events that take place on a daily basis involving animal cruelty. They may not think twice about where the products they buy come from, or what they may have been tested on (Smith). Many who do know the facts about animal testing believe that it is acceptable to test in the interest of saving people, but a large number of the population disagree and loathe it (“Animal Testing”).

Although methods of animal testing has drastically changed over the years, it has become a worldwide debate between animal right’s activists, scientists and the public. Since most of our inventions and medical strives (“Science”) have been made possible because of animal testing, many people believe that it is an essential part of human life. We would not be able to enjoy all the luxuries we do today, such as toothpaste and cosmetics, had animal experimentation not existed; but people are starting to question the ethics and motives (“Animal testing”). Even though scientists and government officials believe animal testing is necessary for medical research, most tests performed are irrelevant, and the reality is that too many animals go through unnecessary agonizing torture often leading to death. A large number of animal testing is uncalled for and must be stopped.

An estimated 50 to 100 million vertebrate animals worldwide are used every year in experimentation (“I Am”). The animals go through agonizing trials where they are pumped full

of unknown drugs and either killed during the experiments, or subsequently euthanized (“Science”). This “research” is carried out inside universities, medical schools, pharmaceutical companies, farms, defense-research institutions, and commercial facilities that provide animal testing services to industrial companies. A vast majority of the animals used in laboratories are bred for research purposes, while a smaller number are caught in the wild or supplied by pet stores. Scientists claim that only rodents and rabbits are used in experimentation and only some of the rodents are mice and rats. They also argue that monkeys are rarely used and despite what animal right’s activists declare, primates are not the main focus of their research (“Put Your Compassion”).

The truth is that many different animals are utilized for scientific experiments including cats, dogs, hamsters, guinea pigs, frogs and turtles (“Animal Experimentation”). This is ironic because most of the animals exploited to improve human life are considered companions to many people around the world. An estimated 52 million people possess an animal companion and would never put them through the pain and torment of experimentation (“Animal Testing”).

The fight against animal cruelty began in 1824 when the RSPCA (Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) was established in England. However, in 1876, the Cruelty to Animals Act was passed which allowed scientists to set in motion the testing of products on animals (“Animal Testing”). The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act was created in 1938 to ensure products that were being sold to the public were safe and not contaminated. The purpose of the FD + C Act is to reassure people that the product they about to purchase is unaltered and safe for use. The only way to be certain that is safe for human consumption is to test the product on animals first (“CFSAN”). Many believe that it is unethical to test new products on humans first, and as a result, billions of animals are killed to ensure human safety. However, the FD + C

Act does not subject cosmetics to pre-market approval and manufacturers can employ whatever testing is needed to ensure the safety of their products (“CFR”). It was not until 1966, when the Animal Welfare Act was passed, that required minimum standards for the care of animals in research laboratories came into place (“Animal Testing”). The Animal Welfare Act also requires all government-run, private laboratories and commercial breeders who sell to pet stores, to undergo unannounced inspections by a government official (“Animal Testing”). However, some of the officials can be paid money to overlook certain things in the establishments and the violators are rarely prosecuted and fined. Seeing a rise in unfair animal treatment, many people joined underground organizations such as The Animal Liberation Front to free captured laboratory animals. In turn, the Animal Enterprise Protection Act was passed making attacks on animal laboratories a federal crime (“I Am”).

In June 1980, Ingrid Newkirk, a renowned animal lover, formed PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) an organization to help end animal suffering. At the time, there was no major organization in place like it, and to date PETA has more than 5 million members. Ingrid has dedicated a part of her life to the alleviation of animal suffering in various parts of the world (“Put Your”). PETA and Ingrid put together many undercover investigations to expose meat factories and universities for cruelty to animals. She and her team have successfully closed down over 60 research institutions (“I Am”). Although the general public views her as an extremist because of her daring, and attention-getting methods to save animals, she never gives up and her love for animals has never died. Her most recent demonstration against animal cruelty came in 2007 when she was filming her latest documentary “I Am an Animal: The Story of Ingrid Newkirk and PETA” (“I Am”). Newkirk and fellow protesters visited Jean-Paul Gaultier’s fur-selling boutique in Paris and gained control of the display windows. Following

their demonstration, including posters of skinned animals, pouring fake blood on all the fur coats and shouting “Gaultier Assassin”, the employees of the boutique called the police. Of course this sudden occurrence of radicalism took everyone by surprise and attracted the paparazzi, which is just what Ingrid wanted (“I Am”).

There are now many other organizations that help animals all around the world. The Humane Society takes in an estimated 34 million animals each year that have been abandoned or abused by their owners. The Humane Society then tries to find good homes for the neglected animals, but often have to euthanize many because they do not have the space to keep up with the constant growing numbers. Another animal welfare group is the ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). With police-like tactics, they respond to reports of animal abuse, dog fighting, and animal neglect, all around the United States. They rescue nearly 2,000 animals each year from their careless owners. Though many of these animal welfare programs promote humane treatment of animals, they do not fully oppose animal testing. They are, however, constantly looking for alternative ways to make animal testing less extreme and painful (“Animal Testing”).

There are radicals who despise any kind of animal testing and will do anything to end the suffering. These people break into research laboratories; free the animals along with burning and destroying the entire laboratory’s equipment. The ALF (Animal Liberation Front) is the most notorious radical animal rights group and was found to be responsible for over 70 attacks on animal-based research labs. Throughout the years, the United States government has closely observed the ALF and in 2005 declared them as a dangerous terrorist organization (“I Am”). PETA and Ingrid Newkirk are constantly being watched under suspicion of being associated with the ALF, even though they have no links to the terrorist group (“I Am”).

Ingrid Newkirk and PETA are working to abolish animal cruelty around the world. There are those who fully support animal cruelty and have the power to stop it quickly though they choose not to. The giant fur and cosmetic industry has harmed and killed millions of animals throughout the years. Many investigations have taken place in the testing labs and fur factories, but the undercover investigators are at risk for arrest, assault and fines. Even though big cosmetic companies such as L'Oreal, Revlon and Estee Lauder have agreed to stop animal testing for their products, there are still a huge number of commonly bought products that are tested on animals ("Animal Testing").

Of the 11 million animals involved in research vivisection worldwide, 45% are used for medical and veterinary purposes and a staggering 35% are used in biomedical purposes (tests that involve chemicals and the body) ("Science"). It is hard for many people to imagine that every minute 219 animals die due to testing in research laboratories located in the United States alone. Although it proves to be more expensive, animal testing is used for many different products in many fields. Scientists test on animals for veterinary purposes as well ("Research").

The USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) approves veterinary products and vaccines used for animals. These products include medicines for heartworm, arthritis, parasites, allergies and heart disease ("CFSAN"). Even though scientists test on animals for veterinary benefits, most of the research is geared toward humans. The products that are tested on animals that better our human life are mostly vanity items and goods that people do not need to survive. These items fail to compare in importance to other products that enrich animals' lives as opposed to perpetuating a vanity cycle that is solely damaging to the animal world ("Research").

Scientists test on animals to test toxicity of drugs, cosmetics, and medical devices. Sometimes animals are tested on for vitamin deficiency, life support systems and surgical

techniques (“Animal Experimentation”). A substance is forced by tube into the animals' stomachs or through holes cut into their throats. It may also be injected under the skin, into a vein, or into the lining of the abdomen; mixed into the animals' food; inhaled through a gas mask; or introduced into the eyes. Experimenters observe the animals' reactions, which can include convulsions, labored breathing, diarrhea, constipation, emaciation, skin eruptions, and bleeding from the eyes, nose, or mouth. Often, to get the data they need, scientists have to repeat one test on many different animals. Most of the tests performed are inhumane, savage, not for the weak-of-heart, and very controversial. After the repeated torture, most animals are killed (if not already dead due to the experiment), to better examine what effect the drugs had on their bodies (“Put Your”). The LD-50 test, which stands for Lethal Dose-50%, means that out of all the animals tested on, 50% of them died. To perform the test, scientists force tubes down animals' throats and noses to pump drugs into them. Even though the LD-50 test has been banned in parts of Europe and the United States, scientists still use this test to determine toxicity of drugs (“Animals”). Another common test is the Draize test of which there are two common types: skin and eye irritancy. Guinea pigs are the most common animal tested on for the Draize skin irritancy test. Their skin is cleaved and chemicals are rubbed on their exposed and bleeding flesh. They are then bandaged up and left with the burning chemicals on them for many days. For the Draize eye irritancy test, rabbits' eyes are clamped open and have chemicals squirted into them. The suffering animals are then left in stocks to keep them from scratching or blinking the chemical out (“Animals”). Not only do private companies perform these inhumane practices for the “benefit” of humans, the government is highly involved too.

Ultimately, the government is behind most animal experimentations, and requires all chemical companies to test on animals to simulate a human's reaction. The government does

their own testing, and in just one experiment, could kill 2,000 animals. The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) is a government-run program designed to protect the Earth's environment. They have been known to shove dogs into inhalation chambers filled with pesticides to make sure it wouldn't be harmful to humans who use it to kill weeds in their lawn. The FDA tests fluoride products by rubbing them on rats' teeth and left for 2 weeks. To complete the test, scientists must kill all 200 rats (the number of rats they test at one time) and bake their heads in an oven to simulate the results of a human's body temperature reacting to the fluoride ("Science"). These tests seem cruel and unusual to many people in the United States, but what many do not know is that animal testing exists around the world. The United States Food and Drug Administration have approved over 160 drugs and vaccines that have depended on animal research. Scientists argue that the discovery of these medicines have helped hundreds of millions of people worldwide and prevented incalculable human suffering (CFSAN). Even though the FDA is responsible for assuring the safety of every product that is put on the market, they also support alternatives to testing on animals. In 1997, the FDA joined with 13 other agencies, one being the (ICCVAM) Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods. Their work is geared toward finding alternative methods for cosmetic testing on animals only, but that does not cover even half of all testing that is occurring worldwide.

Britain conducts experiments on nearly 3 million animals a year versus the United States which only uses 1.1. This is because Europe is a high-fashion center and the heart of all cosmetic companies ("Science"). Surprisingly, Europe is more developed than the United States in the areas of developing alternatives to these inhumane methods. Europe has a goal to end all

cosmetic testing on animals by 2009. In order to achieve this goal, scientists predict they will need 3.9 million additional animals for testing to assure the safety of their products (“Research”).

Some people are so in opposition of animal research, they create a will instating that after their deaths, they want their bodies donated to science to be tested on. Other people volunteer to be given micro-doses of new drugs that do not make them sick. People do this because 25% of all animal testing failed to show effects that have been seen in many human subjects (Feder). Even though scientists argue that all experiments are controlled and everyone must adhere to strict guidelines, the truth is shown through under-cover investigations that show another story. Some researchers go on to say that animal testing is only used when all other alternative methods have been exhausted (“Research”). Scientists also complain that they are constantly persecuted and attacked by animal activists. They insist that the research they perform is not what is portrayed by these activists and that the activists are merely trying to make money. Researchers say that they have had their homes and families targeted by crazy radicals trying to get media coverage (Smith).

The truth is that animal testing can be expensive, uncertain and revolting, but thanks to the hard work of animal right’s activists, the number of animals tested on has fallen by 50% in the past 30 years. Scientists use rodents rather than dogs and cats, and have been able to develop alternatives and somewhat humane ways of testing on them such as the duplication of human cells through computer technology.

Some companies in the United States have already begun research on alternative methods. MatTek, a government-run corporation, grows human tissue that takes only 4 weeks to be ready for testing (Feder). Scientists say that this method of human tissue testing can be used by combining 3 or more cells which creates a realistic human reaction. Another company

working to produce alternatives is Procter & Gamble. Even though they test most of their products on animals, they have spent over \$225 million on research to find alternatives (Feder). There are many other scientists who have made great strides in proving the in-effectiveness of animal testing. David B. Warheit injected fullerenes, a chemical used to create cigarettes, into human cell samples and found that the cells were later destroyed. The same test was performed on lab rats, but their immune systems removed the harmful chemicals thus proving that human cell research can produce more accurate results (Feder).

Research involving animals has become a worldwide debate since the early 1970s when animal rights became a concern (Feder). Because of great efforts made by animal rights activists, the number of lab animals killed each year has dropped 50% over the last thirty years. In the year 2005, only 1.8 million animals were used and killed in research labs, but the statistics are limited to cats, dogs and primates. There are still millions of birds, fish and mice that are unaccounted for. Scientists try to insist that the animals tested on are treated well and humanely killed when all the experiments are complete, but many people don't know both sides of the issue, the whole story, the truth. Even though scientists and government officials believe animal testing is necessary for medical research, most tests performed are irrelevant, and the reality is that the animals go through agonizing torture often leading to death. A large number of animal testing is uncalled for and must be stopped. Why do humans feel as if they have the right to torture and kill innocent animals, yet at the same time call them companions ("Research")? Animal testing is expensive, un-justifiable and the human race has the power to stop it!

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