

Argument essay – animal testing is necessary essay sample

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



Is it really necessary to take the lives of animals in the name of science and for the betterment of humanity? For animal rights activists, like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), the answer is no. PETA pressures labs into halting experiments, because they believe that animals are not to be used by humans for food, clothing, entertainment, or to experiment on (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). Its stance is that any testing is painful, inhumane, and unnecessary when alternatives are available. The PETA website says that animals, like humans, have interests that cannot be sacrificed or traded away simply because it might benefit others. Essentially, PETA is of the opinion that animals and humans should have identical rights.

In their press releases PETA puts out pictures of rabbits with open flesh wounds and dogs with rashes on their skins - all in an attempt to disgust people into sympathy for their cause. In actuality the number of lab animals used has been cut in half in the last 25 years (James-Enger). Of the animals used, 90 percent are rats and mice (James-Enger). Moreover, 11 million animals die each year in animal shelters (Americans for Medical Progress) and an astounding 95 percent of the animals that die in America do so from human consumption (James-Enger). The reason that animal testing is appropriate is that there are regulations in place to minimize testing and pain, the alternatives are insufficient for now, and most importantly the information obtained from experimentation is irreplaceable. While animal rights groups such as PETA advocate abolishing all animal testing that inflicts pain on animals, proponents of testing cite laws and regulations which minimize pain and discomfort.

PETA's position is based on the belief that humans are not superior to animals (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals). The vice president of the Humans Society of the United States (HSUS), an animal rights group that is nearly as extreme as PETA, has been quoted as saying the life of an ant and that of my child should be granted equal consideration (Americans for Medical Progress). If, as PETA and HSUS say, animal and human life is equal, then putting an animal through any pain is immoral. However, there are laws in place to minimize discomfort and inhumane treatment. The laws limit the amount of distress and pain an animal is subjected to. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the body that governs animal testing, must approve all tests (United States Department of Agriculture). The USDA must also authorize the numbers and types of animals experimented on (United States Department of Agriculture). Tests can no longer be performed if conclusive data is already available.

Back in 1991 it was discovered that Procter and Gamble had performed experiments on 300 guinea pigs when the data the tests was to obtain was already available (Animal Testing by the Cosmetic Industry). This is just one of the situations that newer animal testing legislation would have prevented or at least deterred. A fifty-point criterion for assessing pain is in place (United States Department of Agriculture). These points include everything from vocalization of pain to apparent depression. If there is no clear criteria then it is assumed that procedures that cause pain in humans also cause pain in animals (United States Department of Agriculture). When an animal must be restrained it is to be limited to brief periods of around three minutes

(United States Department of Agriculture). This is similar to the procedure followed when a doctor holds a child to administer a vaccination shot. For all surgeries and painful tests, sedatives and anesthetics must be utilized (United States Department of Agriculture). If the test will leave the animal permanently damaged, euthanasia must be administered before the anesthetic wears off (United States Department of Agriculture). For humans this topic is still being debated, but animals are put to sleep every day when an owner or veterinarian decides the quality of the animal's life will be too low for it to go on living. These few but important changes in animal research legislation have aided in improving animal welfare.

PETA believes that the benefits of animal research do not outweigh the costs when alternatives are available; proponents argue that those alternatives are not effective. PETA's stance is that animal life is too valuable to risk on experimentation especially when there are alternatives, such as false human skin grown in culture, computer programs, and using human subjects. Taking a few skin cells and growing them into small squares of skin produces the false human skin. This piece of skin can be used to test irritation reactions to different chemicals. It is being used in the cosmetic industry, which has all but ceased animal testing. One problem with the false skin however is that it can only be exposed to water-soluble chemicals or it suffers extreme damage (D. E.). Furthermore, it currently contains no melanocytes, the chemicals that give skin its color, or immune cells (D. E.). It is not known how or if these substances effect any laboratory setting, but it is desirable for any experiment to mimic real life situations as closely as possible.

Another alternative to actual animal experimentation is using computer simulations. These programs are like encyclopedias of chemical information. They can only run simulations based on information on chemicals and reactions that are already known. This is an obvious problem with this alternative. Computer simulation software cannot accurately predict the effects of enough situations and theoretical chemical combinations to be heavily relied on. What it comes down to is that there currently is no viable replacement for live, responsive cells. Jack H. Botting and Adrian R. Morrison point out that there are no basic differences between the physiology of laboratory animals and humans (Botting, Morrison). These similarities are what scientists need for experiments to be accurate. The matches are never perfect, but animal experiments are a good place for researchers to start looking for answers to questions that are important to human health care.

Another proposed alternative to animal testing is to use human subjects. PETA suggests using people who have particular ailments who would be willing to participate in experiments. The problem with this alternative is that it is not scientifically sound. When conducting a scientific experiment, all variables must be controlled, and running tests on random human subjects does not give reliable results. Assuming that a researcher could find enough people to run an experiment, there would be too many extraneous variables, such as the subject's environment, genes, and other pre-existing conditions. With lab animals the complete medical history is known, the entire life of each animal is documented. Also they are selectively bred to produce genetically similar subjects. Simply put, lab animals are a cheap,

reliable source of information. The benefits gained from animal testing are too widespread to ignore. Everyday life has been changed for the better because of this testing. As 1990 Nobel Prize Laureate Joseph E. Murray, M. D. said, Animal experimentation has been essential to the development of all cardiac surgery, transplantation surgery, joint replacements and all vaccinations (Americans for Medical Progress).

The numbers to back up this claim are that over 440, 000 open-heart surgeries are performed and 11, 000 kidneys are transplanted every year, not to mention that animal experimentation has made possible the salvation of 20, 000 kidney dialysis patients each year (Botting). Also, the ability to test on animals has made possible the relatively safe and successful use of dangerous chemotherapy drugs to treat cancer (Americans for Medical Progress). Drugs such as this cannot be tested on humans because of their strength and potential for killing in inappropriate doses. If the proper dosage were not known, the results would be inaccurate and could be lethal. Many antibiotics and vaccines used today were developed and tested through animal research, as were insulin to control diabetes and nearly all modern anesthetics (Botting). It is hard to imagine life without some of these lifesaving drugs, or even the ones that do not save lives, just make life a little more bearable. It is likewise significant to note that animal testing has benefited animals as well.

When a pet owner takes his or her animal to the veterinarian to receive shots, chances are that those shots are available because of animal experimentation. Heartworm, feline leukemia, rabies, anthrax, and tetanus

are all preventable because of animal testing. PETA and HSUS are honorable institutions with admirable goals, but they are over idealistic and overzealous.

That fact can best be described by the following quote: Animal rights activists blocked for two years research aimed at stopping transmission of HIV from mother to child. That research ultimately demonstrated how AZT can prevent babies from getting AIDS (Americans for Medical Progress). Sometimes the good of the many outweighs the good of the few. This does not mean that animal testing should go unchecked. Suffering is kept to a minimum by legislation and advancements in testing alternatives. As these alternatives progress, the number of live animals needed for testing will gradually decrease and eventually the need for them will hopefully be eliminated. But in the meantime, animal testing is too important to stop. The benefits waiting to be had are too important and any possible drawbacks are too insignificant to allow a halt in animal research.

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