Then who do we believe? essay

There are several safety precautions that we as humans take to ensure our safety. Humans most commonly test things before selling or using them.

This can avoid liability and make sure products are safe. Cosmetics are among the many types of products that are being tested such as fragrances, toiletries, and cosmetics that are tested on millions of animals each year. This has created several controversies between animal rights activists and cosmetic manufacturers. Especially in the European Union Council of Ministers where they want to ban animal testing as soon as they can develop enough alternatives (Milmo, 6). This is because several animals are used in experimentations to test if products are safe for us to use.

Tests like the Draize Irritancy and Skin Tests, where products are put in the eyes of rabbits to test irritations, and the LD50, where several animals are exposed to a chemical are considered ways of torture.

But luckily several corporations are discovering new and reliable ways to replace animals with science and technology to help reduce the amount of animals used. So because testing on animals are absolutely necessary for our safety, as consumers, we do not have the right to use animals in this type of manner, but we should reduce the amount of tests by replacing many with alternatives.

Although this seems wrong, it is the ultimate necessity for human safety in cosmetic use. Animals have been used in cosmetic safety testing primarily because they share similarities to humans. They are quick and easy to use because they live short lives and are easily accessible.

Most animals are raised only for testing, and experimentation is really all that they know. So they really are not taken out of their natural habitat for testing. Testing has been so important to corporations because they are trying to avoid being branded as unsafe. Testing also has been so important that they help avoid liability lawsuits and bad publicity from unsafe products (Hunter, 30).

It all started in 1933 when a woman wanted to thicken her eyelashes. But after applying the dye to her lashes and accidentally to her eyes, she suffered for about three months.

This woman, that the Federal Drug Administration calls “ Mrs. Brown”, eventually went blind. Congress then passed the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act of 1938. The law gave the FDA permission to prohibit any type of cosmetics that may cause some kind of harm to people (Hunter, 30). This is why the tests on products used in or around the eye were so important to be tested.

This law may have prevented several lawsuits that may have occurred in the future. However the cosmetic manufacturers are not required by the FDA to conduct safety tests for cosmetics. Though the testing is important for safety, the amount of animals that are killed each year is cruel.

Using animals with a lower level of intelligence then the normal human being for a renewable resource is wrong (McCoy, 88). It is also immoral to use animals in experiments on products that are not necessities for human survival.

There are basic moral rights that are granted to everyone, which include life, liberty, happiness or well being, and freedom from suffering (Fox, 54). These rights are not legal rights, but moral rights that humans seem to think are only granted to them. Animals always have to adapt to our type of lifestyle even if it means having to suffer (Planet for the Taking Series: Ultimate Slavery). The thought of using millions of animals each year for cosmetic testing is harsh.

This is because several of the tests inflict pain and suffering on animals.

There are two traditional tests used to test cosmetics. One of these tests on animals is the LD50, which stands for the legal dose for 50% of the animals that are exposed to the chemical in an experiment. In this experiment, dogs, cats, rodent, and even primates ingest an increasingly large amount of a substance until 50% of the animals die (Finsen, 17).

This type of test is used to test cosmetics, detergents, pesticides, and food additives that may have a dramatic poisonous effect in a short time. The problem with this test is that it requires a large number of animals. The LD50 only gives acute effects and not chronic effects (Hunter, 26). Not only do these animals have to die in the experiment, but also they must suffer for a while first.

Another common test is the Draize Eye Irritancy and Skin Test that is tested usually on rabbits. This test examines products that are used in or around the eyes.

In this test, a chemical is dropped in one eye of a rabbit while the other eye is used as a control. Experimenters look for bulging, broken blood vessels, or hemorrhaging over a course of three or four days (Hunter, 26). Usually after these tests the animals are killed or used for another experiment. These are both very controversial tests that harm a large number of animals at once. Neither tests show long-term effects nor how they will react with other substances (Finsen, 18). Luckily these two tests are not the only options to product testing.

Manufacturers are coming out with more reliable techniques to that offer faster, less expensive, and more humane ways to obtain data.

To minimize the amount of animal testing, corporations must use alternatives when possible. The John Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health and its Department of Environmental Health Science have been trying to get corporations to replace in vivo for toxicology with in vitro toxicology. In vitro is the test- tube science of using cells, tissues and organs, while in vivo are live animals.

The Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing, also known as CAAT, has been trying to improve in vitro testing for neurotoxicity, skin irritation, eye irritation, and liver or kidney toxicities of many products by awarding grants (Hunter, 26). There is one grant on in vitro that tests to see if a test chemical would be painful or not. Another grant could help replace animals in skin tests and allergens by developing models of human skin using keratinocytes, which are cells in a layer of skin (Hunter, 26).

This type of test could also test corrosiveness instead of using animals.

The in vitro tests are helpful because they do not cause any type of pain or stress to animals. These tests can replace the Draize test for several cosmetics and toiletries like eye shadows, shampoos, perfumes, skin creams and cleansers. By adding these products to a synthetic mixture that stimulates the living cornea in human eye, the possible irritations are scored by color. The colors are arranged by graduations that signify molecular effects on the tissue.

By using about five or six in vitro test, many irritant responses can be recognized. In 1988, the cost of in vitro tests averaged about $50 per product, which compares to $500, 000 for in vivo test (Hunter, 26).

There is a ready source of corneal tissue from the tissue that is discarded during a regular eye surgery. These cells would probably be more accurate than a rabbit’s corneal cells because they are not entirely the same as human cells. These human cells would probably give more accurate results than a rabbit’s cells (Hunter, 27).

Another test that has been reported to reduce 80% to 90% of the number of animals used in eye safety testing is the Agarose Diffusion Method. This non-animal screening test has been available since 1989. This method uses an overlay of agarose, which is a non-gelling type of algae called agar. Basically the test product is placed on a paper filter disc and placed on the agarose.

ADM tests products that can be diluted with water, such as creams, powders or pastes. Then the effects on the cells determine whether it is positive or negative. This test has been favorable for replacing the Draize test (Hunter, 27).

Bacteria have also been used to substitute the Draize test. This is because there is a type of bacteria that can emit light.

A tester can mix the test substance with the bacteria in a solution and the change in light emission shows the possible irritancy of a substance (Hunter, 27). Proctor and Gamble is among the many corporations that have been trying to reduce the amount of animals in their testing. They have actually reduced their amount by 80% since 1984. They have replaced most of their animals with a technique that they call data mining, analysis and modeling.

They call this " testing on software instead of on animals". Basically, Proctor and Gamble has a huge database of information on existing chemicals and past tests to decide whether a product will pass for safety. For new and untested chemicals, its molecular structure is set up to show how atoms are joined to form a molecule and compared to 450, 000 known and previously tested chemicals. Because it is a new chemical there would be no match.

But the Oxford Molecular Group Inc. in Campbell, California uses " structural analogues." They believe chemicals compared to untested chemicals will have similar properties (Anthes, 44).

So as we can see it is important for cosmetic manufacturers to continue running tests on their products for safety, and we as humans do not have the right to kill millions of animals on tests that are not exactly accurate, but thankfully there are several alternatives available to reduce our dependence on animals. The fact that we need to ensure safe products makes completely eliminating testing a difficult commitment for a corporation.

But because of the morality of some of the tests, there should be some kind of reduction from animal testing. Because there are so many alternatives available now there really should not be a reason why a corporation would not reduce the amount of animals used. The newer techniques offer chances to obtain data faster, less expensively, and more humanely (Hunter, 26).

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