

Balancing the Extremes of Animal Testing

It has always been said that a dog is a man's best friend. Owning a pet is considered to be another family member to most. It can be difficult for any family to leave behind any animal that they love and care for. A pet can even be considered a child to some families! However, not every domestic animal gets adopted into a loving home environment. Not every small, cute dog or cat has been taken home and loved. Animal testing is a very controversial, yet important subject in the world today. Two extremist groups are being put to the test daily on this matter: one group believing that animals should be tested for all different types of products before humans, whereas the other group believes that no testing should be done on any animal. For all their effort and having debates yearly, the issue has still never been resolved. About twenty million animals are tested on and killed annually; eight million of those animals (dogs, cats, rabbits, etc.) are used for testing painful products (Andre and Velasquez 1). With these yearly statistics rising, many animal rights activists are looking towards the government to ban any type of animal testing. The activists' choices are also being revoked, which can ruin their opportunities to advance. Many activists focus their concern on businesses and humans and often forget the main concern: animals have feelings too. Activists' main concerns are detrimental to their stand on the entire issue: they believe in helping animals, stopping the harm of animals, and getting domestic animals into a safe and loving environment. On the other end of the spectrum, this causes scientists and researchers to question how they will make any progress in animal research, or testing of new products (Andre and Velasquez 1). This matter of debate does not seem to look like it will reach an end anytime soon. Could it be possible for both sides to agree? Unfortunately, the answer is still up in the air.

Testing cosmetics on animals is one of the major issues surrounding the topic of animal testing and research. This is a big problem everywhere. In Europe, the testing of cosmetics on live rabbits has been banned since 2007, although that may not have stopped in the United States. Other alternatives to test cosmetic ingredients have been made, such as using waste animal tissue from slaughterhouses in replacement of live animals (“Tests Outlawed” 1). Other chemicals causing irritants that are tested on rabbits, mice, rats, and other animals have reached other alternatives as well. In vitro cells are being used in replacement of live animals to determine if cosmetics irritate the skin (“Tests Outlawed” 1). This law was enforced by ECVAM (European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods), and many testing centers are now seeking other alternatives when testing cosmetics. Now that set laws have been determined, it is now illegal for most companies to continue testing on any species (“Tests Outlawed” 1). Yet another replacement to testing products is Episkin, which is reconstructed human skin that can be used to test if certain products irritate the skin (Merali 1). According to Merali, the new Episkin is actually “...the first replacement for animal testing” (1). Animal rights activists receive no compensation for their efforts to decrease cruelty. To the delight of many, alternatives are slowly emerging. After debates across the board, a decision is still not reached.

On the other side of animal testing, you have the supporters of the research. As stated in “Animals Rights and Wrongs”, Wolff and Boyd state, “No animal research = no medical progress” (Wolff and Boyd 1). However, there are many questions as to if using no animal research is a good point either. Is it truly okay for researchers to use animals solely for scientific research and curiosity, or is it morally and ethically wrong? To them, it may be very one-sided in their minds. Is a new cure what is considered the justification of using animal as testing, or some other form of publication (Wolff and Boyd 1)? Many debates across the United States are

held in order for each group to discuss animal testing and prove their point to the opposing side. In the end, the decision has to be made by yourself. Let the informants make their own decisions. This is an issue that will always have opposing sides, conclusions, and alternatives, but a conclusion can be reached by researchers and activists alike who have opposing positions.

Products have been made by companies that do not use animals to test the items before they are put on the shelf. Some animal testing also does not harm the animals in the experiments. For example, there are new developments constantly being discovered by veterinarians around the world. Pet owners are willing to have their pets take part in a clinical study to help cure any disease or problem they may have. In addition to living a healthier life, pets may take part in a clinical study pertaining to vaccines, rabies shots, or diabetes treatments (*Altweb: The Global Clearinghouse for Information on Alternatives to Animal Testing* 1). The positive testing of new shots and vaccines on domestic animals is a point that animal rights activists cannot seem to find fault in. An animal's best interests are never a concern. This is a part of the controversy many groups are torn between when asked if animal rights' testing is ethically right or wrong.

While this is a controversy and matter of opinion to each individual, you have to lay out the facts in order to truly decide how one takes a stand on this issue. There are two options: to be for animal testing, which has many positive effects; or to be against animal testing, which also has many positive effects; the decision to make is personal and private. My opinion may differ from many. There must be a balance between testing on animals and the polar opposite of this. However thin it may be, there is a line between testing on animals and saving their lives. While testing harmful products on any type of species may not be considered morally wrong because, in truth, they are "just an animal", the truth is often lost in that statement. If a parent gives a pet

away, it can be detrimental to the rest of the family. A pet is a family member; it is not just another animal. A large part of society today considers a pet to be part of the family unit. The thought of testing on a member of the family can be repulsive and inhumane. Many companies are now making products that have alternatives to testing items on animals before they are put on the shelf. Over one thousand different companies have made the switch to alternatives of animal testing throughout the years. Some of these companies include major brand labels, such as Abercrombie and Fitch, Victoria's Secret, Sweet Pea products, and many other organic and commercial cosmetics, soaps, and shampoo lines (*Companies that Don't Test on Animals* 1). Many organizations continue to support the banning of all animal testing in the United States, but not all are in agreement. A balance needs to be made between the two opposing sides in order to see that while most testing on animals can be considered cruel and morally wrong, there are certain tests and studies out there which allow domestic animals to either become cured from a disease or live an overall healthier lifestyle. As for the overall viewpoint of being either for or against testing on animals, that is a choice which can either put science research to a halt or cause them to hopefully find alternative methods. Before a concrete decision can be made about how consumers feel about animal rights and testing, look at all the facts. Find out if one side ends up outweighing the positives from the negatives. Discovering a balance between the testing on animals and finding alternatives can be very difficult, but never deemed impossible.

Works Cited

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