

the ♀'s supplement

Cosmetic testing on animals

by Mary Jane Hamilton

In 1986, almost two million animals were used in the testing of various products in Canada alone. Animals are used to test cosmetics, food additives, weapons, pesticides, tobacco, and drugs. The testing techniques include crushing, freezing, boiling, burning, and vivisection.

Although only about ten per cent of animal testing is for cosmetics, it is probably the most disturbing. The use of animal products for raw ingredients of cosmetics and live animals for cosmetic testing for the vanity of human beings is both unnecessary and cruel.

Many different tests are used to discern how cosmetics will affect humans. To test the toxicity of a substance, the LD-50 (LD is lethal dose) test is used. This tests how poisonous a substance is. Usually, rats and mice are force-fed large quantities of a substance such as lipstick until half of them die.

The Draize eye test is used to test for eye irritation. Products such as shampoos or hairsprays are dripped or sprayed into the eyes of restrained, conscious rabbits for up to seven days. This measures the amount of damage done to the eyes. Rabbits are used for this test because the structure of their tear ducts does not allow them to rinse the substances out of their eyes.

To test for skin irritation, substances such as deodorant and face cream are applied to the shaved skin of animals. The substance is usually taped to the shaved areas of guinea pigs or rabbits for a period of time to test the reactions to the substance.

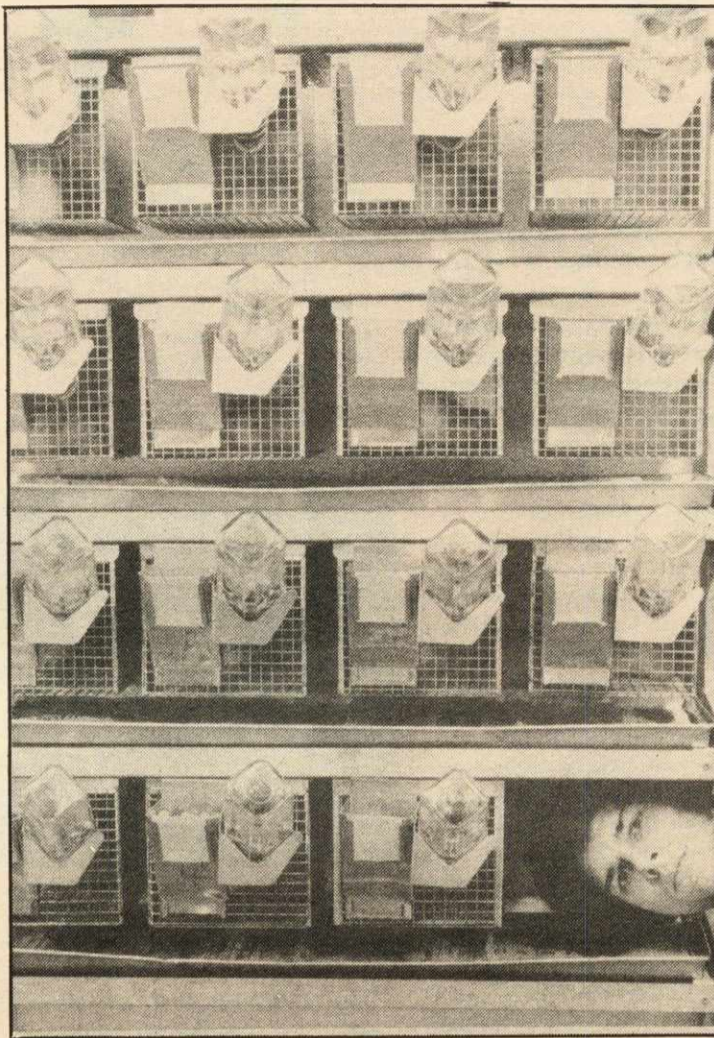
The cosmetic industry claims that human safety is of utmost importance. They state that they want to ensure that their products are safe for their customers and for the workers in their factories.

They say it is too expensive to switch their methods of testing, but this is false.

They say animal testing is the best way of complying with safety regulations, although regulatory agencies do not specifically ask for either the LD-50 or Draize tests. The cosmetic companies say alternative tests are not reliable to give up animal testing for.

Some companies do fund research into alternative testing, but considering how much is spent on advertising in proportion to research, this seems a token gesture. Over a billion dollars annually across North America are spent on advertising in the cosmetics industry, compared to only a few million dollars in research since 1980.

Some companies do use alternative testing, but only at early pre-screening stages. They say it is too expensive to switch to alternative methods of testing, but this is false. Alternatives are much cheaper. Animals have to be cared for, but alterna-



Dalhousie's own rat cages

photo: Rochelle Owen

tives such as tissue cultures are much more economical. Also, cosmetic companies make enough money to switch to alternative testing. In 1986, cosmetic sales in Canada amounted to two billion dollars.

Animal rights organizations such as the Animal Liberation Front and the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Alternatives object to the testing of cosmetics on animals. They maintain that animals suffer unnecessarily in these tests.

They believe that the tests are crude and badly designed, as some tests need to be repeated because of unreliable results.

The animal rights activists assert that results of animal testing are not representative of human reactions, using as an example the case of the Thalidomide birth defects. In order to tell what products are safe, they maintain that certain tests should be conducted on humans.

Further, the animal rights activists say the many alternatives to animal testing should be used more widely. Computer graphics and the mathematical modelling of the structure-activity relationships are at an early stage of development. It may be possible to make an accurate assessment of the positive and negative reactions of an untested substance from the knowledge of its structure and the structure of human cells.

Where possible, using humans for the subjects of testing is the best idea. There is no problem of interspecies variation in humans. Human volunteers are already being used.

Lower organisms, such as bacteria, algae, protozoa, coelenterates, fungi, plants, insects, echinoderms, and molluscs can be used. Unfortunately, these sentient

invertebrates also feel pain.

The *in vitro* technique is one of the best testing procedures. Using tissue culture rather than using live animals, the results are more accurate because the actual cells are being tested instead of the whole animal. Cell cultures and many organ cultures can usually be established from one animal.

An exchange of information among cos-

Some companies avoid animal testing by using harmless natural ingredients.

metic companies is a great alternative. This means testing that has already been done will not be repeated.

Some companies avoid animal testing by using harmless, natural ingredients, such as honey or almond oil, in their products. Other ingredients are deemed to be safe because of their use by the industry throughout the decades.

Of course, public education and awareness are very important for the development of alternatives to animal testing. Awareness can be achieved through presentations at community centres and schools, information booths, distribution of literature, and newspaper and magazine advertisements.

The good, the bad

Some companies that do not test their products or ingredients on animals are:

Aubrey Organics
The Body Shop
Boots No. 7
Borlind of Germany
Clientele
Freeman Cosmetics Corp.
Giovanni Cosmetics Inc.
Jamieson's
John Paul Mitchell Systems
Joba Farms
KMS Research
Mill Creek
Mira Linder
Nexxus
Only Natural Inc.
Rachel Perry Inc.
Reviva Labs Inc.
Schiff
Sebastian International Inc.
Sleepy Hollow Naturals
Soap Factory
Soap Works
Swiss Herbal
Tom's of Maine
Webber Vitamin A

Some companies that use animal testing are:

Alberto Culver (Alberto Balsam, VO5)
American Cyanamid Co. (Breck, Old Spice, Pierre Cardin)
A.M. Robins, Co. (Chapstick)
Avon
Bristol Myers (Ban, Body On Tap)
Cheesebrough-Ponds (Pond's, Cutex, Vaseline)
Colgate Palmolive, Co.
Finesse
Gillette (Gillette, Silkience)
Lever Bros. (Aim, Pepsodent)
L'Oreal
Mary Kay
Maybelline
Nivea
Noxell Corp. (Cover Girl, Noxzema)
Proctor & Gamble (Crest, Head & Shoulders, Ivory, Scope)
Revlon
Schering-Plough Corp. (Coppertone, Solarcaine)
Squibb Corp. (Bain de Soleil, Charles of the Ritz)
Vidal Sassoon

If you would like more information about animal testing in the cosmetic industry, contact:

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