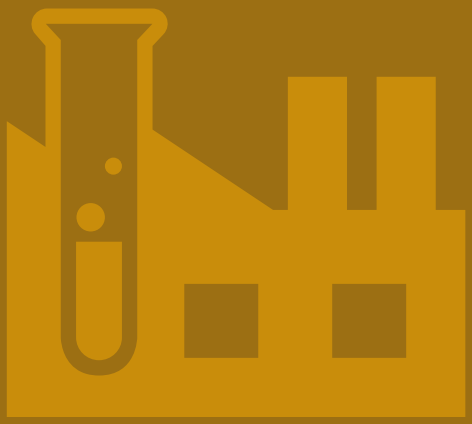
BRIEFING PAPER

DOGS FREE FROM ANIMAL TESTING



THE KENNEL CLUB
Making a difference for dogs

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BRIEFING PAPER

DOGS FREE FROM ANIMAL TESTING

For the thousands of dogs who spend their everyday lives in laboratories, the Kennel Club strongly supports the principles of the three Rs (Refinement, Reduction and Replacement), as the guiding principles which underpin the humane use of animals in scientific research.

The Kennel Club supports the work of FRAME (Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments) and is opposed to the use of dogs in all forms of toxicity testing (whether that is for chemicals, pesticides or medicines). Whilst we acknowledge that such testing is sometimes required by national and international regulators, we believe it should be kept to an absolute minimum and be used only when alternative testing is not possible.

We are increasingly concerned about regulations requiring animal testing on a second species (i.e. in addition to rodents), as dogs (Beagles) are commonly used. Given the limited usefulness of testing on dogs and the alternatives available, we believe government should take further action to reduce the number of dogs being used for toxicity tests.

LIMITED VALUE OF TESTING ON DOGS

According to research undertaken by FRAME and BUAV (now Cruelty Free International), with funding from the Kennel Club, on the use of dogs in human toxicology, the predictive success of testing on dogs is often little better than chance. The study re-analysed past drug testing data and found that dogs are an unreliable indicator of whether substances will be safe for humans.[1] Yet in the UK approximately 3,000 dogs are used annually, 80 percent of these in 'second species' toxicity tests,[2] even though many in the pharmaceutical industry say they would prefer not to use them.

The use of two species in these types of tests is a worldwide requirement, with primates and dogs usually chosen for these tests. Their purpose is to check and confirm the first results, which are typically conducted on rodents. Yet 94 percent of drugs that pass preclinical tests fail in human clinical trials. Around half of those that do pass are later withdrawn or re-labelled because of adverse effects not predicted by animal tests.[3]

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1 'An Analysis of the Use of Animal Models in Predicting Human Toxicology and Drug Safety', Bailey, J, Thew, M, and Balls, M, 2014

2 Home Office – Annual Statistics of scientific procedures on living animals, www.gov.uk/government/collections/animals-in-science-statistics

3 'time to end the use of dogs in toxicity testing'. Cruelty Free International briefing

The failure rate is costly, both to the pharmaceutical industry and in terms of human safety and animal welfare. The BUAV and FRAME study ultimately concluded that canine models are highly inconsistent predictors of toxic responses in humans.

The reason for this is because the absence of toxicity in dogs provides essentially no insight into the likelihood of toxicity in humans. These findings mean that, for example, if a new drug has a 70 percent chance of not being toxic in humans, then a negative test in dogs will increase this probability to an average of just 72 percent.[4] The dog tests therefore provide no additional confidence in the outcome for humans, but at great ethical – and financial – expense.

PRINCIPLES OF ANIMAL TESTING

The Kennel Club strongly supports the principles of the three Rs (Refinement, Reduction and Replacement), as the guiding principles which underpin the humane use of animals in scientific research:

- Refinement: improving scientific procedures and husbandry to minimise potential pain and suffering and improve animal welfare in situations where the use of animals is unavoidable.

- Reduction: improving test methods to enable researchers to obtain comparable levels of information from fewer animals or more information from the same number of animals.

- Replacement: finding and using replacements to animal testing e.g. computer modelling.

Dogs' welfare can be severely comprised during testing. Dogs may be force fed or injected with chemicals or drugs on a daily basis. They are kept in the laboratory environment for several months whilst being observed for signs of adverse effects. These may include seizures, organ damage, internal bleeding and even death. The laboratory environment is detrimental to good dog welfare as the animals are kept in restricted spaces in small groups, often do not have access to the outdoors and have limited positive contact with humans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986, which insists that no animal experiments be conducted if there is a realistic alternative, and various other animal welfare legislation, evidence suggests more needs to be done to ensure dogs are not used in testing unnecessarily, that more resources are made available for alternative testing methods; and that the highest possible standards of animal welfare are adhered to by animal testing establishments.

4 'An Analysis of the Use of Animal Models in Predicting Human Toxicology and Drug Safety', Bailey, J, Thew, M, and Balls, M, 2014

IN SUMMARY, TO HELP REDUCE THE USE OF DOGS IN ANIMAL TESTS, WE BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Review the use of dogs as a second species for toxicity testing in human drug development in light of new research on the lack of usefulness of this practice
- Make it compulsory for establishments to have a positive homing policy to ensure that as many dogs as possible can be released into loving homes
- Review the welfare of dogs in laboratories including breeding, transportation, housing, nutrition, health, handling and euthanasia, to ensure that all efforts to reduce suffering are being implemented
- Increase funding to develop alternatives to animal testing

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