



Animal testing ban for household products is mere window dressing

Monday 18 July 2011

The RSPCA has warned that the Government's ban on testing household products on animals, announced today (Monday), will do very little to help laboratory animals.

A second announcement on how the Government's pledge 'to work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research' will be fulfilled is also a cop-out, the RSPCA said.

The Government is changing the way that household product testing is licensed, effectively banning the use of animals for this purpose.

RSPCA senior scientist Barney Reed said: "Banning the use of animals to test household products may sound good, but out of 3.6 million animals used in experiments in the UK last year, just 24 were used for this purpose, and none were used the year before.

Little impact

"In reality this will have very little impact and is essentially mere window dressing. This move will impress no-one unless it is followed by more substantial progress in other areas of safety testing where tens of thousands of animals continue to suffer."

The RSPCA has always been opposed to animal testing for inessential substances such as cosmetics and toiletries, household products and garden chemicals. There is absolutely no justification for causing animal suffering in order to develop and test products used for such trivial purposes.

The Government also announced that the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) will play the lead role in fulfilling its pledge to work to reduce the numbers of animals used in scientific research.

Something more wide-ranging was expected

Barney said: "The NC3Rs was established by the previous government and has done some good work. However, what's been announced doesn't appear to be anything particularly new. We think it's a total cop-out for the present Government to shift the responsibility for meeting its own promise onto a single organisation with limited resources.

"Reducing the use and suffering of animals is the responsibility of everyone who uses animals or creates a demand for their use. We were expecting something far more wide-ranging and creative. People have waited more than a year for this announcement - they will be feeling badly let down."

These announcements come at a time when there are significant concerns that the Government will choose to water down many areas of the current UK law regulating animal experiments to the minimum required in a new European Directive.

Barney added: "The statements made today will sound even more hollow and insignificant if the Government now takes steps to weaken controls on animal experiments in the UK."

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Notes to editors:

- It is difficult to define “household products”. Some substances are developed exclusively for use in such products, but most are likely to have other uses in industry or agriculture. This means that a ban on the testing of household products would be difficult to enforce and might affect very few products, because they could be tested as “industrial” or “agricultural” chemicals instead, effectively sidestepping the ban.

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