

Fables & Facts

Most people are shocked to learn that some environmental organizations not only endorse, but actively lobby for, animal-poisoning tests of chemicals that are already well known to be toxic. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is one such organization, having aggressively lobbied the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop what has become the largest animal-testing program of all time—the Endocrine Disruptor Screening Program (EDSP). The WWF has also teamed up with the chemical industry to fund basic research on “endocrine disruptors.” This factsheet addresses statements made by the WWF in its response to PETA supporters who have expressed concern about the WWF’s promotion of animal-testing.

Their fables

World Wildlife Fund Statement

1

“The entire WWF family is committed to providing the most up-to-date and scientifically accurate information possible for the long-term protection of wildlife. Once that information is in hand, we can take the necessary follow-up steps to save wildlife and habitat around the world. WWF believes that the EPA’s testing of toxic chemicals to keep them out of the environment is a positive and productive force for that long-term mission.”

2

“Studies on laboratory animals have played a critical role in establishing “the wildlife-human connection” – associations between chemical exposures and damage to both wildlife and humans.”

3

“Out of the thousands of industrial chemicals released into our environment, we know the effects of only a tiny fraction... It is imperative to test the multitude of chemicals currently in use, their alternatives, and the other new chemicals coming on the market. EPA’s program includes tests not only to protect humans, but tests to protect other species.”

The facts

PETA’s Response

The EDSP is by far the largest animal-testing program in history, with the potential to kill as many as 100 million animals. Despite this massive slaughter of animals, the EPA has made absolutely no commitment to take any regulatory action to restrict chemicals considered to be “endocrine disruptors.” In fact, scientists admit that they cannot define what an “endocrine disruptor” is or does, and have no idea what they will do with the volumes of uninterpretable data that will be generated. There is therefore no reason to believe that human health, the environment, or wildlife will be better protected from the dangers of toxic chemicals as a result of the EDSP.

It has been consistently demonstrated that animal testing also has little, if any, relevance to humans. Scientists have denounced the EPA’s EDSP as “appalling toxicology” because the massive doses of chemicals that will be forced or injected into animals have no relevance to the low levels of chemicals to which humans might be exposed. Others have questioned the relevance to humans of animal test results, given the huge differences between human and nonhuman animal hormone systems. Even different strains of the same animal species can have drastically different reactions to the same chemical. (One study found that rats of the Fischer 344 strain were up to 10,000 times more sensitive to the effects of the chemical bisphenol A than the closely related Sprague-Dawley strain.) For these reasons, animal tests have consistently yielded conflicting and unreliable results. (The WWF should also note that there is no such species as the “laboratory animal.”)

There is far more information about the effects of industrial chemicals than the WWF acknowledges—much of it in publicly accessible databases. One study found that for the majority of chemicals examined, existing data were sufficient for basic assessments of health and environmental hazards.¹

With regard to the WWF’s claim that the EDSP includes

¹ “Availability of HPV Chemical Data.” Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Washington, D.C. 1998.

Their fables

World Wildlife
Fund Statement

The facts

PETA's
Response



"WWF supports reducing reliance on animals in testing chemicals. But until we can come up with a better alternative, we sometimes have little choice but to test chemicals on laboratory animals in order to protect a broader number of species, including current and future human generations."

"tests to protect other species," it must be noted that the vast majority of the tests under development by the EPA are aimed exclusively at extrapolating from animals in laboratory tests to human health effects—not wildlife. Furthermore, the EDSP does not include any mechanism for actually reducing emissions and exposures to chemicals that are already known to be hazardous. If the WWF is truly committed to safeguarding human and animal welfare, it should be working to reduce chemical emissions and exposures, instead of calling for more cruel and useless animal-testing.

The WWF has, to the best of our knowledge, made no financial investment to support the development or use of non-animal test methods. In fact, in a recent EPA advisory committee meeting, while other committee members were discussing the problems with using a test that kills as many as 3,000 animals, the WWF's representative enthusiastically endorsed this additional test. Far from advocating "reduced reliance on animals," WWF representatives consistently throw the organization's support behind any and all animal tests, regardless of how inhumane and useless they are.

Moreover, it is shameful and hypocritical for the WWF to seek to justify poisoning animals in laboratories as a means to supposedly "protect a broader number of species." Toxicity testing is an inherently violent and unethical practice that inflicts horrendous pain and suffering on animals—both wild and domestic—while doing nothing to protect human health, the environment, or animals from harmful exposures to dangerous chemicals.

What You Can Do

Please write to the WWF and ask for its written commitment to stop supporting animal tests and the EPA's massive chemical-testing programs. Remind them that the goals of protecting the public and the environment from hazardous chemicals and protecting animals from suffering and death in laboratories are not mutually exclusive. Non-animal test methods are not only more humane, they are generally more rapid and economical, often producing results that are more reliable and relevant to humans than the results of tests on animals. The WWF could do a great deal to protect human health, the environment, and animals by financially supporting research institutions that focus on developing non-animal test methods, such as the Institute for *In Vitro* Sciences, MatTek, and *In Vitro* International, and by promoting the use of non-animal test methods by government regulatory agencies. Send letters to:

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Please be sure to include your full name and mailing or e-mail address in your letter, and send a copy of any response you receive to PETA at the address below.

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