

Features

Animals subjected to experimentation

by Sharon West
Staff Writer

Most civilized people agree that animal cruelty is disgusting. However, millions of animals are used in unnecessary laboratory experiments each year by many companies to test products that you are currently using.

According to a journal excerpt by Leslie Fain, an employee of the Gillette Company, technicians injected rabbits with chemicals and threw them approximately 10 feet into a pile of other dead or dying rabbits.

Fain said, "Blood was coming out of some of their mouths, others were convulsing and having spasms. It got to the point where I couldn't stand to watch their suffering and asked to give them a second shot. At this point I became ill. I ran to the bathroom and cried."

Unfortunately, Gillette is not the only company that uses animals to test products. A fact sheet published by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) lists approximately 75 companies that use animals in their tests. Several of

these companies include Amway, Bristol-Meyers, Clorox Company, Johnson & Johnson, Neutrogena and Revlon.

The Draize Eye Irritancy Test has been used by a number of companies since 1944 to test the effects of products that might get into the human eye.

According to a fact sheet published by PETA, rabbits are immobilized in stocks to prevent them from scratching or clawing the substance out of their eyes. Unlike humans, rabbits do not produce tears that could possibly wash out the substance. The technician pulls the lower lid of the eye away from the eyeball and drops several milligrams of the substance into the eye. Common reactions to these tests are swollen eyelids, inflamed irises, ulceration, bleeding, massive deterioration, and blindness.

Another test that is commonly used is the acute toxicity test, or lethal dose test. The Lethal Dose 50 (LD-50) is the most widely used. It determines the amount of a substance that will kill part of a group of animals in a certain time period. The experimenter feeds the

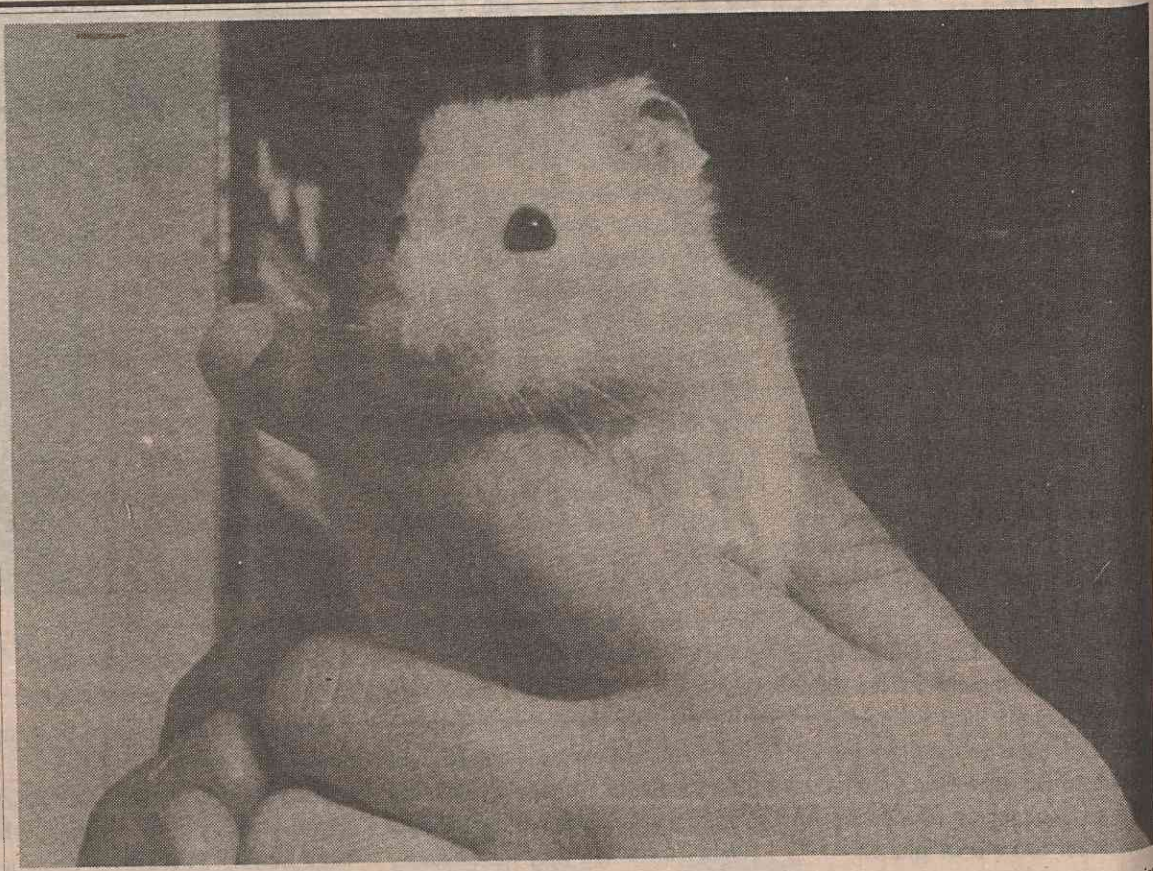


Photo by Nicol Husemeier

What a face: Hamsters are just one of the many kinds of animals that are subjected to laboratory testing. As a consumer, you can deter animal testing by buying products that are made by manufacturers that do not perform these tests.

substance to the animals by a tube or through holes cut into the animals' throats.

The poisoned animals exhibit symptoms such as convulsions, paralysis, or bleeding from the eyes, nose or mouth. At the end of the testing period, the surviving animals are killed and examined.

The accuracy of these tests is questionable- results of these tests

are often not applicable to humans. Many products that have been proven safe in laboratory tests on animals are removed from the market when they cause serious side effects, birth defects, or even death in humans.

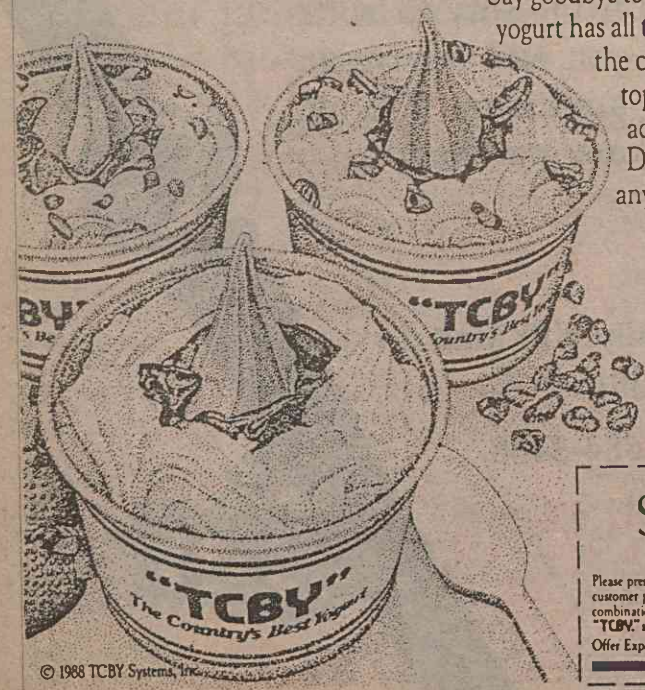
Companies are not required by the law to conduct product tests on animals. The Food and Drug Administration requires companies to test their products for safety or carry a warning label if safety is not proven. However, the FDA cannot dictate the method companies use to test their products.

Reliable alternatives to animal tests exist, but are not often used. Computers programmed with information from human experience can be used to measure toxicity. Organ-culture systems that use

human eyes from eye banks or cell culture systems can be used to test toxicity or eye-irritancy. Human skin patch tests and proper warning labels are adequate in most cases.

As a consumer, you can deter animal testing by buying products that are made by manufacturers that do not perform these tests. There are over 100 companies that do not use animals to test their products. You can also write to the companies that use animal testing and explain why you no longer buy their product. A complete list of companies that do and do not use animals to test their products can be obtained by writing to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, P.O. Box 4251, Washington, D.C. 20015.

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