



Factsheet

Animal Testing and REACH

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to have safer chemicals and a healthier future for wildlife and people. REACH offers a chance to identify and phase out the worst chemicals. New markets for safer products, and increased trust, should make it good news for the chemical industry too.

Wildlife and people are exposed to thousands of chemicals that lack basic safety information. Eighty-six per cent of the 2500 chemicals used in large quantities do not have enough safety information publicly available to do a basic safety assessment. Many are known to be potentially dangerous. Some can interfere with the hormone systems of animals and humans. Others do not break down in nature, but accumulate in our bodies. Chemicals are increasingly suspected of being linked to cancers, allergies and reproductive problems.

REACH proposes that industry provide basic, long-overdue safety information on the chemicals it sells. In some cases this requires testing on animals. WWF believes that:

- REACH is necessary to reduce the toxic threat to wildlife, humans and the environment. The widespread use of chemicals whose long-term effects are unknown is giant, uncontrolled experiment on people and wildlife. REACH will end this experiment, at least in Europe;
- Chemical testing should rely on non-animal methods whenever these are available;
- All outdated or unnecessary animal testing should be prevented;
- There should be an increase in funding to urgently develop non-animal tests.

WWF does not believe that REACH will lead to a big increase in animal testing as:

- REACH provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to develop and promote alternative non-animal tests – alternatives that will also be usable for other safety testing;
- REACH specifically states that *“testing on vertebrate animals for the purposes of this Regulation shall be undertaken only as a last resort.”* This requirement is strongly supported by WWF;
- REACH specifically states that the test methods used are to be revised *“in particular to refine, reduce or replace animal testing”*;
- Industry proposals for a ‘risk-based’ approach to registration were strongly opposed by WWF and have not been adopted. A ‘risk-based’ approach to registration would have resulted in a never ending cycle of animal tests by (i) companies trying to show that their chemicals are safe, and (ii) the authorities using independent test results to dispute industry claims. This is what happens under the current chemicals legislation, which REACH is designed to replace;
- For the majority of the chemicals covered by REACH, only available data will need to be provided. This will mean no extra testing for these chemicals;
- Many chemicals belong to families or groups of substances that do not require separate testing;
- WWF actively pressed for changes to REACH that further reduced animal testing. For example, WWF strongly supported ‘One Substance, One Registration’ (OSOR) – which requires the sharing of both animal and non-animal test data;
- A position paper by the UK government (May 2005) states that REACH *“will represent a substantial improvement over the current methods of chemical regulation being faster, simpler and more efficient hence necessitating less animal testing for each chemical registered.”*

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