

**The Cost of Cosmetics**

Anonymous

Department of English, Anoka Ramsey Community College

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Professor Chris McCarthy

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## The Cost of Cosmetics

Every day millions of people use cosmetics to make themselves feel beautiful. The cost of this is the lives of hundreds of animals. People who support animal testing say that it ensures the safety of these cosmetic products. They also argue that animal testing isn't that bad since the animals are protected by the Animal Welfare Act. They believe that the cheapest route is to test on animals. In addition to that, many of them believe that animal lives aren't valuable. Moreover, some think banning animal testing here in the United States won't stop many companies from testing on animals. While all these beliefs are understandable, especially for people who are unaware of the facts and details of animal testing like I was before researching this topic, these views aren't all accurate. In fact, the results of animal testing are often unreliable, the law doesn't fully protect animals, the alternatives to animal testing are often more cost effective, animal lives hold value outside of animal testing, and in addition to banning animal testing, we can ban the sale of these products.

One of the biggest reasons people support animal testing is that it helps make sure the products are safe to use on humans. However, animal testing is not always reliable and there are many alternatives. According to Susan Nicol (2023) from *World Animal Foundation*, "Studies have proven that cosmetics tests using animal testing practices to predict human reactions to cosmetics are only effective 40% to 60% of the time, while alternatives to animal testing can accurately predict 80% of the time." In other words, animal testing is not the most reliable type of testing we have available to us. Wouldn't you rather use a product that was tested with a test that has a higher rate of accuracy than the test with a lower rate? Rachel Graham (2023) provides a list of alternatives to animal testing in her article for *Sentient Media*. Some of the alternatives

she gives are, “Organ on chip technology [...], computer modeling [...], in vitro human tissue, [and] human volunteer research.” There is no scarcity of alternatives to animal testing. So, if these alternatives have proven to be more accurate than animal testing, why don’t companies switch to these alternatives?

Another argument for animal testing is that the Animal Welfare Act protects animals in animal testing. As a result, they think that animal testing is not “that bad.” While the AWA does provide limitations and some protections, it does not protect all animals, nor does it do enough. Claire Hamlett (2023) in an article for *Sentient Media*, says that the act, “[...] excludes most animals who are used for laboratory research, including birds, rats and mice” and that “The list of animals who are not protected by federal law is significantly longer than the list of animals who are protected.” The tests that are performed on animals who are not protected, and the ones that are, are still cruel. *World Animal Foundation* writer Jen Osborn (2023), in an article about animal testing on rabbits, talks about a test called “The Draize Test.” Osborn (2023) describes the test, “Non-anesthetized rabbits are held in full body restraints while test chemicals [...] are dripped into their eyes or spread on their skin which has been shaved and scraped.” This is just one test done on one species in animal testing. The cruelty that these animals are subjected to are hard to even read about, and yet they are done every day. So, the reality is that the AWA doesn’t actually do a whole lot to really protect these animals. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (n.d.) “[The Animal Welfare Act] is the only Federal law in the United States that regulates the treatment of animals in research, teaching, testing, exhibition, transport, and by dealers.” The only law we have to protect the animals in animal testing, doesn’t protect them.

Supporters of animal testing in the cosmetics industry also argue that it is more cost effective to test on animals than the alternatives. In most cases, however, the alternatives to animal testing are actually less expensive. In an article titled “Costs of Animal and Non-Animal Testing” by the Humane Society International (2023), we see a table of animal test costs and the costs of the alternative in vitro test. These in vitro tests are briefly defined as, “computer modeling techniques” and in each case the in vitro test costs less, in some cases significantly less. For example, in the “Skin corrosion” section, the animal test cost is \$1,800, while the two in vitro tests, “EpiDerm™ human skin model” and “CORROSITEX® membrane barrier”, cost \$850 and \$500, respectively. These are just two examples of alternate testing methods that cost way less than testing on animals. So not only is testing on animals less reliable, as shown before, it is also more costly. We can save money and animals by using these alternatives, that clearly have more benefits than animal testing.

Another reason people support animal testing is that they place little, if any at all, value on the life of animals. While the value of life is subjective, there are many ways animal life benefits humans. According to The Humane Society of the United States (2023), “[...] rabbits, mice, guinea pigs, and rats” are used in tests for the cosmetics industry. Each of these animals help keep the ecosystem balanced. Their lives have value outside of animal testing. Samuel Camenzind (2021) wrote a paper on philosopher Immanuel Kant, describing his view on animals. Camenzind (2021) writes that, “Kant is in agreement with the so-called 3Rs” He then goes on to explain what the 3Rs are, telling us that, “an experiment involving animals is morally [...] permissible only if: No alternative method using no animals exists (replacement); no more animals are used than necessary [...] and as little harm as possible is inflicted on the animals” Clearly, animal testing today does not follow these 3Rs and this great philosopher would frown

upon it. This philosopher valued animal life enough that he would only think an experiment on one would be okay if it followed some tight rules. If someone who studied the nature of reality found value in animal life I think it's a good bet for us to also find value in animal life.

Some supporters argue that making animal testing illegal in the United States would just cause companies to outsource their products from countries that have little or no regulation on animal testing in the cosmetics industry. Nevertheless, making animal testing illegal in the United States will make it harder for companies to produce these products. Also, while making animal testing in the cosmetics industry illegal, we should also ban the sale of products made with animal testing. The Humane Society of the United States (2023) tells us that, “11 states [...] have passed laws banning the sale of animal-tested cosmetics.” and “44 countries have prohibited animal testing” These eleven states show that we can ban the sale of animal-tested cosmetics to further encourage companies to stop animal testing. If the United States not only makes animal testing illegal, but also makes the sale of the products illegal, animal testing in the cosmetics industry would cease in the United States. Forty-four countries have already taken the first step, it's time America took it as well.

So, in a nutshell, animal testing is unreliable, costly, and cruel. Unfortunately, putting a complete stop to animal testing is a hard fight and finding a perfect solution will always remain a dream. However, you and I are people with choices and a voice. I stopped supporting companies that use animal testing and try my best to use cruelty free products instead. You can do this too! It is a small step, but if many people take this step, together we can stop unnecessary animal testing. We can further educate ourselves on animal testing and everything that goes with animal testing. These poor animals cannot stand up for themselves, so it is up to us to stand up for them.

We can educate the people around us and ask them to stop supporting companies that test on animals. One by one, we will make a difference. We all want to feel beautiful, and use cosmetic products to do so, but it's not beautiful to make animals suffer.

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