



# Be Cruelty-Free

The global campaign to end animal testing for cosmetics



## Rabbits: Blinded for Beauty

The rabbit has become synonymous with cosmetics animal testing the world over and the image most often used on cruelty-free labelling. Rabbits are still widely used in eye and skin tests for consumer products and, alongside guinea pigs, rats and mice, endure untold suffering for the beauty industry.

### Life in the Lab

Like so many animals condemned to a life in the laboratory, rabbits used in experiments are denied the ability to express many of their natural behaviours. In the wild, rabbits live in burrows in large communities. They are shy and sensitive creatures who mostly rest in the underground darkness during the day and forage at night. Being suited to an essentially nocturnal existence makes rabbits extremely sensitive to light. They also have an acute sense of hearing which they rely on to sense predators.

Life in the laboratory is a world away from this natural environment. Often housed in isolation in bare wire cages without sufficient space or environmental enrichment, rabbits are prone to loneliness and boredom. Their senses are also overloaded with constant, bright artificial lighting from which there is no escape, and incessant noise such as the clanging of metal cages and loud music blaring from radios. These can all cause these sensitive animals to become stressed which in turn can weaken their immune system, making them prone to illness. They can also suffer sore and damaged feet from standing in metal caging, and even self-mutilate to relieve their anxiety.

### Testing

Over the years, rabbits have most often been used in the Draize Eye and Skin tests. Developed in the 1940s, these tests involve holding rabbits in full body restraints so that chemicals can be dripped in their eye or spread on their shaved and scraped skin. The restraint stops the animals pawing at their eyes or back to relieve the discomfort and so interfere with the experiment. The Draize test is used to measure irritation or corrosion caused to the eye or skin, but it is notoriously unreliable, producing highly variable results. It is also extremely unpleasant and painful, causing eye reddening, swelling, ulceration, even blindness, or skin cracking and bleeding.

### Why rabbits?

There is very little science behind the reason why rabbits are used. It has more to do with practical considerations - they are small and gentle and so easy to handle; they are relatively cheap to maintain if only basic standards are adhered to; and they breed fast, creating new test subjects quickly. Rabbits also have no tear ducts so, unlike humans, they can't cry out harmful substances from their eye. This means that in the Draize eye test the rabbit's eye is exposed to more of the test chemical for longer periods, and is one of the main reasons why rabbits are chosen for this procedure.

## **Alternatives**

Human skin equivalent tests, EpiDerm™ and EpiSkin™ have been scientifically validated and accepted to completely replace animal tests for skin corrosion and irritation, and SkinEthic has also been approved to replace animals for skin irritation. The BCOP (Bovine Corneal Opacity and Permeability) test and the ICE (Isolated Chicken Eye) test have been validated and accepted as replacements for live animals in eye irritancy. The cell-based Fluorescein Leakage Test, while not a 1:1 replacement for the rabbit test, can also be used as part of a step-wise strategy to considerably reduce the number of animals subjected to eye irritancy testing. Most recently, scientists in Japan have developed a new in vitro eye irritation method using human cornea cells which shows promise as an additional replacement option of the future.

In addition to these available alternatives, cruelty-free companies can simply avoid using new ingredients that require new test data. There are thousands of such ingredients available that have long histories of safe use and don't require any new testing at all.



## **The Leaping Bunny**

The Leaping Bunny standard guarantees that a product and its ingredients are cruelty-free, by requiring companies to pledge that they will not conduct or commission animal tests for any of their finished products, ingredients, or formulations after a fixed cut-off date or purchase new ingredients that have been animal tested after that date. Look out for the Leaping Bunny on products and online when choosing your cosmetics.

## ***Be Cruelty-Free***

With bunnies having suffered so much over the years for the cosmetics industry, little wonder we chose a rabbit to represent our global *Be Cruelty-Free* campaign to end cosmetics cruelty worldwide. Around the world, our *Be Cruelty-Free* campaign is leading the charge to end the suffering of rabbits, mice and other animals still suffering for cosmetics. These animals have no voice but you can speak up for them by signing our [Be Cruelty-Free pledge](#) today and supporting our campaign to turn the whole world cruelty-free.

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