



For immediate release
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Undercover investigation exposes shocking animal cruelty and major failings by the UK government

The **BUAV**, one of the world's leading organisations campaigning to end animal experiments, has today revealed graphic disturbing evidence of the cruelty and suffering inflicted on thousands of animals every year in UK research; including for the first time, the appalling suffering inflicted on mice for the worldwide craze of using **botox products** to temporarily reduce facial lines and wrinkles.

The BUAV has also accused the Home Office, which regulates animal experiments in the UK, of breaking the law in several ways including not enforcing the use of non animal alternatives and failing to minimise the suffering inflicted on animals.

The **BUAV** placed an undercover worker in Wickham Laboratories in Hampshire for 8 months to the end of October 2009. She secretly filmed the appalling suffering inflicted on thousands of animals inside the facility. The laboratory carries out poisoning tests on thousands of mice every month for a product called Dysport® (manufactured by Ipsen), which contains the deadly botulinum toxin. Botulinum toxin is licensed in the UK for some relatively rare medical conditions – and the Home Office claims it only allows the animal tests for these purposes - but is increasingly being used “off-label” in cosmetic clinics for purely cosmetic purposes where it is commonly referred to as ‘botox.’

In practice it is impossible for the Home Office to ensure that the Dysport® tested at Wickham on an industrial scale does not end up in cosmetic clinics. The Government has banned animal testing for cosmetics since 1997.

The test used is the archaic poisoning test LD50 (lethal dose 50 - this is the dose at which 50% of the mice would be expected to die when injected with the toxin), one of the cruellest and most controversial tests carried out on animals. Even the Home Office classifies it as ‘substantial severity.’

Wickham also uses rabbits in pyrogenicity (fever) tests where a test substance is injected into an ear vein to detect contaminants. The rabbits are restrained by their necks in stocks with a

temperature probe deep in their rectum for many hours at a time, with no access to water. According to the laboratory, damage to the ear and rectum can occur as well as damage to the rabbits' backs from struggling in the stocks. Rabbits can be starved for up to 30 hours and are re-used repeatedly in further pyrogen tests, adding to their distress.

Key findings:

- The UK government is failing in its legal obligation to enforce the use of the 3R's (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) principle for non-animal alternatives where they exist and to ensure that, if animals are used, then it should be the minimum number and with the minimum amount of suffering.
- The appalling suffering inflicted on thousands of animals in cruel, crude and archaic tests. Animals kept in small, virtually barren cages that failed to meet their behavioural and social needs.
- The total inadequacy of measures to intervene before death with the LD50 poisoning tests - far more animals died an agonizing death than were euthanased.
- Mice crudely killed by having their necks broken on a corridor floor with a ball point pen. Some staff breaking the backs of mice rather than their necks resulting in excruciating additional suffering.
- Some animals suffered in tests that are no longer required by national and international regulations. This destroys the often made claim that companies have to do animals tests because regulators require them.
- A glaring conflict of interest by the statutory 'Named Veterinary Surgeon,' responsible for advising on the animals' welfare. He is a director of Wickham and with his wife owns virtually all the shares. Recorded weekly visits by him often lasted just for a few minutes.

Tests such as the LD50 test for botulinum toxin and the pyrogenicity test have valid *in vitro* alternatives and it is outrageous that they are not being implemented. The *Limulus* amoebocyte lysate assay (LAL) is an 'in vitro' method that can often be used for detecting bacterial **pyrogens** and is recognized by regulatory authorities in both Europe and the USA as an alternative to the rabbit pyrogenicity test. Indeed, European guidelines stress the alternative is often more reliable.

The SNAP-25 assay, a method that does not use live animals but instead measures the activity of the toxin in a test tube, can be used to replace the **botox** mouse LD50 tests. The BUAV believes that under UK law this test should be used. Furthermore, this test has been validated by an official UK government laboratory, the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC), and has been used by them since 1999, specifically for Dysport®. Inexplicably, the UK Home Office is not insisting on this test even after all these years.

BUAV's Director of Special Projects, Sarah Kite states: *"Time and time again the government and animal research community claim that animals are only used as a last resort for vital medical research and that animal suffering is kept to a minimum. This BUAV investigation has blown those claims wide open. Our shocking findings show that crude, archaic and extremely cruel animal tests are still allowed in the UK even when an alternative test exists and animal testing is not required by official bodies."*

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