

Media Release

For immediate release
Wednesday 16 September 2009

4.5 Million Animals to be spared from Duplicative Chemical Toxicity Tests

Groups Applaud Swift Action by EU Chemicals Agency

Brussels (16 Sept. 2009)—Animal protection groups today welcomed a response from the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) to their request for clarification regarding safety testing requirements under the EU's REACH chemicals regulation, which promises to spare approximately 4.5 million animals from suffering and death in chemical-poisoning tests..

Animal groups—including the European Coalition to End Animal Experiments, Eurogroup for Animals, Humane Society International - Europe, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and PETA Europe and the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine—wrote last month to ECHA raising concerns about the risk of companies conducting duplicative animal tests for some types of toxicity when registering their chemicals under REACH. The groups' concerns arose due to the cumulative nature of the way information requirements are listed within REACH, according to which chemicals are required to undergo progressively more animal testing as their production volume increases.

In particular, there was a danger that companies would conduct 'screening' tests for reproductive and general toxicity (which still consume dozens to hundreds of animals per chemical), and would later be required to conduct more comprehensive tests for these same effects. The language within REACH and its guidance was ambiguous on this point.

ECHA has today issued a press statement clarifying that animal tests need not be conducted if similar, more comprehensive tests are going to be proposed. Companies registering chemicals that are produced in quantities of 100 tonnes or more can therefore fulfil initial registration requirements without performing the screening tests if they are proposing to do more comprehensive tests later in the process.

The animal groups estimate, based on ECHA's own figures that 6,000 chemicals may fall under the relevant information requirements, that this clarification alone has the potential to save the lives of 4.5 million animals.

The task at hand now is to make sure companies abide by this clear instruction and do not conduct duplicative testing on qualifying chemicals.

"We are delighted that ECHA has responded so promptly and positively to our request and helped prevent potential duplicative testing using more than 4 million animals. We still have other concerns regarding REACH and its implementation, but this common sense approach is a good start."

ENDS

REACH is the EU's Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals regulation.

The 13 Aug. joint letter to ECHA is available online at <http://bit.ly/8Y4T5>

http://echa.europa.eu/doc/press/pr_09_13_animal_testing_carification_20090915.pdf

More specifically, 28-day general toxicity studies and screening tests for reproductive toxicity do not need to be conducted if 90-day general toxicity studies or pre-natal developmental studies are proposed.