

Making Tracks

from Caroline Lucas, Green Party MEP for South East England

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Testing chemicals on animals

There is still a very serious threat that in its proposal for a future EU Chemicals Policy, the European Commission may demand that safety tests are conducted on up to 30,000 chemicals that have been in use in Europe since before 1981. Potentially this could involve the use of 12 million animals. It is crucial that animal protection organisations and MEPs do all they can to ensure this does not happen. Whilst the chemicals that we use must be safe for us and not harm the environment, outdated and cruel animal based toxicity tests must be replaced by humane alternatives. The EU Chemicals Policy should aim to collect comparable data on existing substances through entirely non-animal test regimes.

Although chemicals first marketed before 1981 have not been subjected to standardised test regimes, there is thought to be a substantial amount of animal test data on these substances already in existence. The first step for the Commission is to ensure that all existing data is brought forward, and that companies are compelled to share data to prevent further animal testing. The new legislation must incorporate non-animal test strategies, with development of further non-animal tests being prioritised.

I have raised this issue on a number of occasions with the Commission but please urge the Environment Commissioner, Margot Wallstrom, rue de la Loi 200, 1049 Brussels, Belgium, to publish proposals shortly that would not require animals to be used during safety testing.

A very successful Parliamentary Question

Following rumours that there had been cuts to funding of the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM), I submitted a Parliamentary Question requesting details of recent and current ECVAM budgets. This pressure appears to have helped bring about a substantial increase in funding for the validation of alternative tests. The Commission has

promised further funding increases as more new tests are brought forward for validation. This is excellent news and goes to show how MEPs can make a major difference for animals.

Cosmetic testing on animals

In January the European Parliament voted to accept a rather weak agreement reached by the Parliament, Commission and Council of Ministers on whether or not to ban cosmetics that have been tested on animals. The European Union had originally agreed to ban the sales of cosmetics tested on animals in 1998. However, this decision was postponed first until 2000, and then until 2002. Although MEPs wanted a total marketing and test ban we were forced to compromise and accept that the sales ban would not start until 2009 for 11 tests, and 2013 for a further 3 tests, with animal testing being banned in Europe from 2009.

This is a step forward but companies have already begun to decide on how to flout this law – I have obtained a copy of an internal Proctor and Gamble memo that shows that companies will test ingredients for ‘other purposes’ and then use them for cosmetics.

It is shocking that an agreement reached in the 1990s can be postponed twice and then substantially weakened on the whim of the industry and weak



“This is the second of our occasional newsletters which explains the many activities within the EU that affect animal rights. When I became an MEP, I saw it as an opportunity to make changes for the better. I am Vice-President of the European Parliament’s animal welfare committee. We have achieved a considerable amount in influencing proposals from the European Commission and we could do more – with your support. Please read on to find out what has been done already – and how you can help.”

Caroline Lucas MEP

willed governments. The UK government said it could not support a total sales/marketing ban because it feared that it would break the rules of the World Trade Organisation. This is simply not the case – a marketing ban could be defended under WTO rules, and it is also morally right – and for the government to use this as an excuse to subject thousands of animals every year to pointless and painful experiments is completely unacceptable.



Broiler chickens



Photo: Compassion in World Farming

I am also looking forward to a proposal next year from the Commission to improve the on-farm welfare of the 4 thousand million broiler chickens that are reared for meat in the European Union every year (800 million alone in the UK). I have recently urged the Commission to give much more space to each chicken as well as to introduce legislation to prevent painful leg disorders which result from genetically selected birds growing too large for their legs to be able to support them.

Sonar killing whales

The use of a new type of Low Frequency Active Sonar by the Royal Navy and other navies, particularly the US navy, is of grave concern. This type of sonar sends out waves that are extremely damaging to whales and other marine mammals such as dolphins. I am hearing repeatedly that whales are being washed up on beaches near to where NATO has carried out naval exercises – dead with haemorrhages and internal bleeding. Recently I initiated a debate in the Parliament on this issue but the European Commission and the UK are still dragging their feet.

Cat and dog fur

I have been working on trying to get the UK and EU to ban the import and sale of cat and dog fur. That an estimated 2,000,000 dogs and cats are

allowed to be slaughtered and sold annually as part of an international fur trade is abhorrent. Most dog and cat fur comes from countries in the Far East. Furthermore, the slaughter process itself is horrific. Recent film shows a dog tied up tightly by its neck with wire to a gate before being stabbed in the groin and left to bleed to death. *On more than one occasion investigators reported that the animals were skinned whilst still alive.* I urged the UK government to support the Swedish government who are so concerned that they initiated a discussion amongst European agriculture ministers in Brussels – before the meeting I wrote to the UK government asking them to support the Swedes and to introduce a law banning the import and sale of such furs into the UK. **Please also write to Baroness Symons, the UK Minister for Trade, DTI, 1 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0ET** urging that the UK bans the import and sale of such furs rather than just introduce labelling measures.

The Iberian Lynx

The Iberian lynx, which lives in Spain and Portugal – is a protected species under European law yet it could become extinct as early as 2005. This is in part due to European funded infrastructure projects such as the Odelouca Dam, Alqueva Dam and A2 motorway projects. Furthermore the failure of the Portuguese and Spanish governments to take measure to increase the rabbit population, to preserve old cork trees (where lynx often nest) and to promote sustainable traditional farming systems has also contributed to the decline. I have raised my concerns about the possible extinction of the Iberian Lynx with both the European Commission and the Animal Welfare group within the European Parliament.

Foot and Mouth disease

In December the European Parliament adopted a report which stated that the Government traumatized farmers, damaged health and the rural environment and broke animal welfare rules during its handling of last year's foot and mouth outbreak. The report crucially concluded that vaccination should replace the disastrous contiguous cull as the response of first choice in any future outbreak. Labour MEPs lost their fight to water down the report by removing criticism of the Government – they tried to remove references to the breaches in animal welfare and environmental legislation and the failure of the contiguous cull policy – which led to the unnecessary slaughter of over 10 million animals – to curb the spread of the disease.

**KEEP CAMPAIGNING –
MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

For more information on my work,
see my website
www.carolinelucasmep.org.uk

Office of Caroline Lucas MEP
Suite 58, The Hop Exchange,
24 Southwark Street,
London SE1 1TY
Tel: 020 7407 6281
Fax: 020 7234 0183