**Background: *"Should Animals Be Used for Scientific or Commercial Testing?"***

An estimated 26 million animals are used every year in the United States for scientific and commercial testing. Animals are used to develop medical treatments, determine the **toxicity** [level of poison] of medications, check the safety of products destined for human use, and other biomedical, commercial, and health care uses. Research on living animals has been practiced since at least 500 BC.  
  
Proponents of animal testing say that it has enabled the development of numerous life-saving treatments for both humans and animals, that there is no **alternative** [other] method for researching a complete living organism, and that strict **regulations** [rules] prevent the mistreatment of animals in laboratories.  
  
Opponents of animal testing say that it is cruel and **inhumane** [cruel] to experiment on animals, that alternative methods available to researchers can replace animal testing, and that animals are so different from human beings that research on animals often yields irrelevant results.

**Public Opinion**  
  
A public **outcry** [a strong expression of disapproval] over animal testing and the treatment of animals in general broke out in the United States in the mid-1960s, leading to the passage of the **AWA** [Animal Welfare Act, which is a law that controls the housing and transportation of animals used for research]. An article in the November 29, 1965 issue of *Sports Illustrated* about Pepper, a farmer's pet Dalmation that was kidnapped and sold into experimentation, is believed to have been the initial **catalyst** [start; spark] for the rise in anti-testing sentiment. Pepper died after researchers attempted to implant an experimental cardiac pacemaker in her body.   
  
A May 2013 Gallup poll found that 56% of Americans say medical testing on animals is morally acceptable (down from 65% in 2001), with 39% saying it is morally wrong. Younger Americans are less likely to accept animal testing. 47% of people aged 18-34 say that animal testing is morally acceptable, whereas 60% of people aged 35-54 and 61% of people aged 55 and older say it is morally acceptable. 67% of registered voters in the US are opposed to using animals to test cosmetics and personal care products, according to a 2013 nationwide poll conducted by Lake Research Partners. The poll found that women are more likely to object, with 76% of women under 50 and 70% of women over 50 being opposed to animal testing, and 63% of men under and over 50 being opposed. 52% of voters said they feel safer using a product that was tested using non-animal methods, while 18% said they feel safer with products tested on animals.

**The Modern Debate**  
  
The 1975 publication of *Animal Liberation* by Australian philosopher Peter Singer **galvanized** [shocked someone into action] the animal rights and anti-testing movements by popularizing the notion of "speciesism" as being analogous to racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice. Addressing animal testing specifically, Singer predicted that "one day... our children's children, reading about what was done in laboratories in the twentieth century, will feel the same sense of horror and incredulity... that we now feel when we read about the **atrocities** [horrors] of the **Roman gladiatorial arenas** [games where gladiators, or warriors, fought to the death] or the eighteenth-century slave trade."   
  
In 1981, an early victory by then-fledgling animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) served to **revitalize** [bring new life to] the anti-testing movement once again. A PETA activist working undercover at the Institute for Biological Research in Silver Spring, MD took photographs of monkeys in the facility that had engaged in self-mutilation due to stress. The laboratory's director, Edward Taub, was charged with more than a dozen animal cruelty offences, and an especially **notorious** [famous, typically for a bad reason] photo of a monkey in a harness with all four limbs restrained became a symbolic image for the animal rights movement.   
  
In 2001, controversy erupted over animal experiments undertaken by a veterinarian at Ohio State University. Dr. Michael Podell infected cats with the feline AIDS virus in order to study why **methamphetamine** [a type of drug] users deteriorate more quickly from the symptoms of AIDS. After receiving several death threats, Dr. Podell abandoned his academic career. Over 60% of biomedical scientists polled by *Nature* magazine say "animal-rights activists present a real threat to essential biomedical research."   
  
A 2007 report by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences called for a reduction in the use of animal testing, recommending instead the increased use of ***in vitro*** [in glass]methods using human cells. Though the report **touted** [praised] new technologies that could eventually eliminate the need for animal testing altogether, the authors acknowledged that "For the foreseeable future... targeted tests in animals would need to be used to **complement** [add to] the in vitro tests, because current methods cannot yet adequately mirror the metabolism of a whole animal."

In Mar. 2013, the European Union banned the import and sale of cosmetic products that use ingredients tested on animals. Some proponents of animal testing objected, arguing that some animal tests had no non-animal equivalents. A spokesman for the trade association Cosmetics Europe stated it is likely "that consumers in Europe won’t have access to new products because we can’t ensure that some ingredients will be safe without access to suitable and adequate testing." India and Israel have also banned animal testing for cosmetic products, while the United States has no such ban in place. China is the only major market where testing all cosmetics on animals is required by law, and foreign companies distributing their products to China must also have them tested on animals. China has announced that its animal testing requirement will be waived for shampoo, perfume, and other so-called "non-special use cosmetics" manufactured by Chinese

companies after June 2014. "Special use cosmetics," including hair regrowth, hair removal, dye and permanent wave products, antiperspirant, and sunscreen, will continue to warrant mandatory animal testing.

After ceasing to breed chimpanzees for research in May 2007, the US National Institutes of Health announced in June 2013 that it will retire most of its chimpanzees (310 in total) over the next several years. While the decision was welcomed by animal rights groups, proponents said the decision would have a negative impact on the development of critical vaccines and treatments. The Texas Biomedical Research Institute released a statement claiming that the number of chimps to be retained (up to 50) was "not sufficient to enable the rapid development of better preventions and cures for hepatitis B and C, which kill a million people every year." The United States and Gabon are the only two countries in the world that still experiment on chimpanzees.

Pro animal testing billboard posted by the Foundation for Biomedical Research.  
*Source: Jane E. Allen, "Animal Rights: Scientists' Billboards Ask Whether You'd Save a Child or a Lab Rat," abcnews.go.com, Apr. 14, 2011*