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OECD Reaches Agreement to Abolish Unnecessary Animal Testing

OECD countries, through the OECD Chemical Committee of delegates responsible for national chemical policies and safety procedures in their own countries, have agreed to abolish a test which has been widely criticised as inhumane to animals.

The OECD manual of internationally accepted Test Guidelines, which sets guidelines for the testing of chemicals and chemical products world-wide, will delete OECD Test Guideline 401, also known as the LD50 Draize test, after a phasing-out period of one year at which time the test will be rejected by the regulatory community.

The Draize test for acute oral toxicity provides information for the safety assessment of chemical substances harmful to humans and mammalian wildlife. This information is crucial when considering accidental exposure to certain chemicals in the workplace, to young children at home, and after transport accidents. However, the Draize test was developed almost 50 years ago and the UK, Germany and the USA have taken the lead in developing more humane tests. Now, instead of dosing at least 20 animals with a test substance which might be expected to kill 50% of them within 14 days, there are new tests which drastically reduce not only the number of animals used but also the suffering they endure and the death rate.

The new tests, updated OECD Test Guidelines 420, 423 and 425, will be phased-in over the coming year in order to give industry, test laboratories and the regulatory community sufficient time to become familiar with the new methods.

The OECD website on the Test Guidelines Programme (<http://www.oecd.org/ehs/test>) provides detailed information on the alternative methods and the deletion of Guideline 401. Inquiries can also be made to Dr. Herman Koeter, Principal Administrator of the Test Guidelines Programme (herman.koeter@oecd.org).

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