BUAV campaigning to end animal experiments

F A C T S H E E T **A4**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT VIVISECTION

• What is vivisection?

Vivisection literally means the 'cutting up' of living animals, but has now become more generally used as the term for all experiments on living animals (*in vivo)* as many animal experiments, such as toxicity (poisoning) tests, will not involve surgical procedures. Non-animal research techniques include such things as cell cultures, computer modelling or artificial systems.

• How many animals are used?

It is estimated that over 100 million animals suffer every year in laboratory experiments world-wide, with at least 10-11 million animals used in the EU. However, as most countries provide only incomplete statistics it is impossible to know the exact number. Animals bred for research but subsequently killed as 'surplus' are also currently excluded from the statistics. If these animals were added to the annual statistics, the real figure for the total number of animals involved in research around the world would undoubtedly increase by many millions. There has been a huge increase in the number of animals – particularly mice and rats – used in genetic engineering experiments and this is predicted to continue to increase in the future. The UK is Europe's largest user of animals for experiments – check out the UK statistics at our Resource Centre.

• What species are used for experiments?

A wide variety of animal species are used for vivisection around the world. Rats and mice are used in a large proportion of laboratory experiments, mainly because they are easy to handle and cheap to keep because of their small size. They occupy less space in a laboratory than larger animals and can produce 50 – 100 babies a year. Albino rabbits are commonly used for eye and skin tests because they are easy to handle and they have a very limited ability to "cry away" substances from their eyes during experiments. Guinea pigs are also commonly used in skin testing and batch testing for substances such as vaccines. Dogs and primates are commonly used in toxicity testing, brain research, dental research and surgical experiments. The most common breed of laboratory dog is the beagle, chosen primarily because they are good-natured and a manageable size for testing procedures. Primates such as baboons, macaques, marmosets and chimps continue to be used in their thousands. Other animals commonly used for research include cats, birds, fish, pigs, horses, sheep and hamsters, but many other species are used as well.

• What type of experiments are animals used in?

Animals are used in many different types of experiments; all experiments cause pain and suffering. The animals involved will either die as a result of the experiment or be deliberately killed afterwards, often for post-mortem examination. In the laboratory an animal may be poisoned; deprived of food, water or sleep; applied with skin and eye irritants; subjected to psychological stress; deliberately infected with disease; brain damaged; paralysed; surgically mutilated; irradiated; burned; gassed; force fed and electrocuted. Researchers around the world use animals to test or develop almost anything from household products, cosmetics and food additives to pharmaceuticals, industrial chemicals, agrochemicals, pet foods, medical devices and tobacco and alcohol products. Genetic engineering experiments subject animals to myriad forms of physical deformity as well as more subtle

forms of suffering. Military experiments subject animals to the effects of poisonous gas, decompression sickness, blast wounds, burns and radiation as they assess new and existing weapons and surgical techniques 'in the field'. Animals are even used in 'curiosity driven' research. In fact, almost all of the products used and consumed by humans every day around the world, will have been tested on animals at some point in time.

• Where do laboratory animals come from?

Many research establishments have their own breeding facilities, however a large proportion of research animals are 'purpose bred' by commercial companies that specialise in supplying animals for vivisection. The research industry often tries to defend its treatment of animals by emphasising that they are 'purpose bred' as if this means they are somehow different from other animals. The breeders' catalogues talk about the animals they sell as 'products', boasting fast delivery and easy dispatch of orders, as though these living, breathing animals are no more than laboratory equipment. The truth of course is that a laboratory animal has exactly the same capacity to suffer physically and psychologically as a pet animal.

Many primates used in vivisection around the world, such as macaques and baboons, are trapped in the wild or captive bred in terrible conditions in countries such as Mauritius, Barbados, Indonesia, the Philippines, Tanzania and China. They are then transported thousands of miles to be sold to laboratories in Europe, the United States and the rest of the world. These primates can endure such terrible conditions and stress on their long journeys that many do not reach their destination alive.

• Are animal experiments cruel?

Yes suffering is an inherent part of vivisection. Animal experiments have to be licensed in the UK by the Government; a license is granted if the Government itself deems it to have the potential to cause "pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm". The BUAV believes that deliberately subjecting animals to physical and psychological harm in laboratory experiments is cruel and therefore morally unjustifiable. As well as enduring painful experiments, animals can also suffer from the every day existence in the breeding factories where many of them start life. An increasing number of genetics experiments mean that animals are now being bred with deformities or cancer, even before they are entered in experimental procedures. Transportation, the artificial and inadequate conditions and surroundings of the laboratory, all cause the animals stress- they too can experience fear, boredom, depression and psychological distress and the totality of suffering can be immense.

• But don't we have the right to use animals?

Simply because we have the *ability* to use and abuse animals, doesn't mean we have the *right* to do so. One argument often used by pro-vivisectionists to justify animal experiments is that humans are 'superior' to other animals. Just like other forms of prejudice such as racism, this speciesist argument implies that because we consider ourselves to be superior, the rights, suffering or death of those we consider to be inferior (in this case other sentient creatures) is somehow less significant or valid than our own. The BUAV believes that this is a very selfish approach to life. As human beings we have the unique ability to understand that other animals suffer unnecessarily as a result of our actions, and to change our behaviour accordingly so as to avoid the suffering of others. As an individual you have a choice to strive for the type of society you really want. Do you want a truly compassionate society that accepts its moral responsibility to look after other animals and avoid causing them deliberate suffering? Or do you want a selfish society where the oppression of those who cannot speak for themselves is deemed acceptable and where mankind's self-appointed superiority justifies animal cruelty?

• Aren't laboratory animals protected by law?

It is often argued by pro-vivisectionists that we have the strictest laws in the world to protect laboratory animals. Firstly, it is a nonsense to claim that the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (the UK legislation governing animal experiments) was devised in order to protect laboratory animals. It wasn't, it was devised to protect animal researchers by allowing them to subject animals in laboratories to the sort of treatment that animals outside the laboratory are legally protected from. Laboratory animals are specifically excluded from the main piece of UK animal protection law, the 1911 Protection of Animals Act.

The 1911 Act protects domestic animals in the UK from abuse and cruel treatment. Under the 1911 Act it is an offence to *"ill-treat, torture, terrify any animal … or, by wantonly or unreasonably doing or omitting to do an act, cause any unnecessary suffering to an animal…";* to *"wilfully, without any reasonable cause or excuse, administer … any poisonous or injurious drug or substance to any animal…";* or to subject *"any animal to any operation which is performed without due care and humanity."*

So whilst you or I would, quite rightly, be punished for deliberately poisoning, burning, blinding or electrocuting our family pet, researchers can simply apply for a Home Office license to do any of these things perfectly legally. This presents a completely indefensible legal anomaly. A dog, rabbit or hamster in the laboratory is exactly the same as the dog, rabbit or hamster that you love as your family pet. They have the same capacity to suffer. So if deliberately harming them in the home is a punishable offence, how can deliberately harming them in the laboratory be justifiable?

It is certainly true that there are many countries in the world where legislation governing animal experiments is far weaker than the UK, or virtually non-existent. However, just because the UK legislation is better in theory than that of a country with very poor legislation, that doesn't automatically make our UK legislation something to be proud of. It has to be judged by its own merits, not by comparison with a poor example.

It is also important to remember that under UK legislation it is still perfectly legal for an animal in a laboratory to be unnaturally caged for its entire life; poisoned; deprived of food, water or sleep; applied with skin and eye irritants; subjected to psychological stress; deliberately infected with disease; brain damaged; paralysed; surgically mutilated; irradiated; burned; gassed; force fed, electrocuted and killed. What kind of protection is that?

You also have to remember that the legislation is often poorly enforced and animal researchers / institutions often escape any effective punishment for breaking the law. Many BUAV undercover investigations over the years have revealed examples of guidelines or laws being ignored or breached, and have highlighted how inadequate monitoring and enforcement really is.

• It is rodents mainly being used anyway so what is the problem?

Yes the majority of animals used are rodents like mice and rats but these are small creatures with a huge capacity to suffer. Their pain and distress should matter just as much. Rats and mice still endure appalling treatment, often being used in toxicity (poisoning) experiments and are killed by having their neck broken, their head chopped off or they are gassed in large numbers. Tens of thousands of these tiny animals are also killed as 'surplus' and a huge number of rodents are used in genetic engineering experiments where they can suffer hideous physical deformity or be bred to suffer from painful and debilitating diseases such as cancer.

Animal researchers highlight the number of rodents used because they are counting on the assumption that most people don't care about the suffering of these tiny, highly sensitive animals. But thankfully that simply isn't true. In an opinion poll commission by the BUAV and conducted by polling experts TNS in August 2003, a massive 81% of people said that experiments which cause pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm should not be allowed on mice or rats.

By focusing on the high number of rodents used in experiments, animal researchers are also trying to deliberately avoid focusing on the huge number of other species used in experiments. For example, in 2002 a massive 20,855 rabbits were used in UK experiments, as well as 5,746 dogs and 43,746 guinea pigs not to mention many thousands of other animals.

- **If we ban more animal experiments in the UK, or impose more restrictions on researchers, won't they just go abroad to countries where the legislation is weaker?**

When challenged about the horrors of vivisection, animal researchers often claim that the UK has the strictest legislation in the world to protect lab animals (the BUAV disagrees – see above) and that researchers have to abide by high welfare standards which they are happy to do as responsible scientists. If that's true, then it is highly contradictory to also argue that restrictions on what you can do to lab animals will lead scientists to move abroad.

If a scientist is so keen to avoid restrictions on the sort of deliberate suffering you can inflict on laboratory animals, then surely that is not the sort of scientist anyone would encourage to stay working in the UK anyway.

This is the sort of argument that would have no credibility if applied to any other form of unethical activity. When the Government banned fur farming here, it did so in the knowledge that UK fur farming activity could well move abroad where conditions for the animals could be even worse, but that wasn't the point – it was banned because it was cruel, end of story!

- **If you had to choose between saving the life of your child or saving a rat, which one would you choose?**

This type of question is based on an often-repeated cliché which itself relies on a misrepresentation of what vivisection is actually about. Faced with such an unrealistic dilemma, the vast majority of people would naturally choose to save the life of their own child. It is hoped, by those posing the question, that that sort of honest response reveals a weakness in the anti-vivisection argument, an admission that ultimately people are more important than animals. And yet the cliché fails to do that on any level.

Firstly there is no realistic correlation between the nature of the unrealistic scenario posed by the question, and the reality of vivisection. Vivisection never delivers us the straight choice between saving a child or saving a rat. Instead it is about deliberately inflicting suffering and ultimately death on thousands if not millions of animals with no more than the mere hope that that immense collective suffering may in some way lead to a greater understanding of a given disease. Yet even that basic premise is fundamentally flawed, because it is based on the assumption that extrapolating test results from biologically and physiologically distinct animals is a reliable, credible and robust method of scientific endeavour.

Secondly, even if we suspend our disbelief for one moment and imagine that we were faced with such a choice, what does the question prove? Most people would say they would choose the life of their own child over that of a rat, but all that proves is that you love your own child. Faced with a similar unrealistic scenario – if you had to choose to save the life of your child or the life of someone else's child, which would you choose? – once again, most people's honest response would be that they would save the life of their own child and once again all that you would be demonstrating is that they love their child.

But what you certainly haven't demonstrated by either scenario is that because you love your child more than a rat or more than someone else's child even, that that in itself justifies inflicting suffering on the other party by experimenting on them.

- **Don't we need animal experiments to make sure drugs are safe for humans?**

Animal experiments tell us about animals, not about people. The results of animal studies can never guarantee the safety or efficacy of human medicines or other products because of the fundamental biological, anatomical and biochemical differences between the species. Different species can have completely contradictory responses to a range of substances, and it is not until a substance is tried in human clinical trials that we ever really know that it is safe for use. For example, there can be huge differences in the responses to drug effects in humans and other animals. Aspirin is used as a relatively safe and effective painkiller for humans but can be fatal to cats; Penicillin is a widely used antibiotic in humans and yet it can kill guinea pigs; Arsenic is very dangerous for humans but does not present the same level of threat to rats, mice or sheep; insulin, a drug used safely by people with diabetes, can produce terrible deformities in mice, rabbits and chickens.

The danger of relying on animal studies is illustrated by the long list of animal tested drugs that are withdrawn from sale or restricted in their use as a result of unexpected side effects in human patients. In April 2000 a study published by US watchdog group Public Citizen reported that an estimated 100,000 Americans die every year from adverse drug reactions. And a report by the Audit Commission "A spoonful of sugar" published in 2002, revealed that human deaths attributed to adverse drug reactions have increased more than five-fold in the UK in the past ten years, to reach more than 1,100 in 2000. According to a scientific study published in 2001, 16,000 people die every year in Germany from adverse drug reactions (Ref: P Schoenhoefer et al: DGPT-Forum 2001, 28, 15-19). We all want to see real advancement in the treatment of painful and debilitating human diseases, but we believe that these advances depend on developing and using modern, biologically relevant research techniques that do not involve animals.

It's also worth remembering that there are companies developing and testing drugs that don't use animals at all. For example, the UK company Pharmagene Laboratories only uses human data, tissues and computers and still produces safe drugs.

- **Haven't animal experiments been responsible for medical advances?**

Despite this theory being virtually impossible to prove, it is often presented as an undisputed truth by those who wish to perpetuate animal research. It is a matter of historical fact that experiments on animals formed a part of scientific / medical research in years past, that in itself is not disputed. What can be disputed is whether or not animal experimentation has played a vital or even a positive role in that scientific research. The fact that vivisection has taken place as one part of a multi-layer research & development phase in the lead up to a drug entering the market, is not the same thing at all as being able to say that that drug was only developed because of vivisection. Indeed it is very different to saying that it could not have been developed if vivisection had not been included at all.

We shouldn't forget that in the nineteenth or early twentieth century, for example, cutting-edge non-animal research techniques such as computer simulations, cell or organ cultures, complex artificial systems, QSARs or brain imaging, simply wasn't available. So we will simply never know if past drug discoveries or medical advances could have been made (and indeed have been made more quickly or effectively) using these methods.

There are countless examples of where animal experiments have positively hindered medical progress. Most recently, a report published in New Scientist (26 February 2004) explained how research into Multiple Sclerosis (MS) based on misleading animal models has potentially set back medical progress by many years. MS was thought to be due to the patient's own immune system attacking the myelin sheath surrounding nerve cells. This assumption was largely based on perceived similarities between MS and an artificially induced condition in laboratory animals called Experimental Allergic Encephalitis (EAE). In November 2002, three neurology experts from Glasgow University and the Leiden University Medical Centre published claims that the traditional animal model of (MS) was so inappropriate that it had actually delayed progress in MS research (J R Coll Physicians Edinb 2002, 32: 244-65).

It is also key to remember that the major causes of death in 19th century Britain were diseases such as TB, diphtheria and cholera, the same diseases that today continue to be the major causes of death in the developing world. In the developing world hundreds of thousands of people die prematurely not because enough animals aren't used for medical research, but because people don't have enough food, clean water or shelter to survive. By the middle of the twentieth century in Britain, before the widespread introduction of modern drugs, vaccines and antibiotics, these diseases had all but disappeared and life expectancy had dramatically improved. Such major advances in human health did not come from animal experiments but from improvements in nutrition, housing and sanitation.

Today, diseases such as cancer and heart disease are the major killers in our society, while HIV/AIDS continues to increase. Despite a massive rise in animal based research around the world, conditions such as these continue to take their toll. Animal based research is failing to find the answers to these problems.

- **Aren't animal experiments required by law?**

Animal experiments are actually very seldom a legal requirement; there are a few cases where the law actually stipulates animal experiments, but usually the law simply requires that a company submits a certain amount of test data before a product can be marketed, without dictating the method by which that test data must be acquired. However, because animal tests have been conducted for so many years and the regulatory authorities which require the test data are predisposed to accept data from animal studies rather than non-animal techniques, the whole system of product development, regulation and marketing has become inextricably linked with animal experiments. The law, test guidelines and the attitude of regulatory authorities all need to change in order to move away from animal experiments and to embrace more modern, non-animal test methods.

- **How can I oppose vivisection but still take medicines that are animal tested?**

It obviously wouldn't be responsible for the BUAV to advise anyone about taking prescribed medication - if you have questions about taking a particular drug you should always address these to your doctor. Unfortunately most pharmaceuticals will indeed have been tested on animals without your consent, regardless of the fact that animal testing offers no guarantee of human safety. However, taking these drugs does not exclude you from voicing your opposition to animal testing. Nor does it mean that you subscribe to the notion that the drug was necessarily developed in the safest and most reliable or ethical way. It is an entirely coherent position to take such drugs and yet firmly believe that there are safer, more reliable and humane techniques for developing and safety testing medicines for human conditions.

Some pro-vivisection groups promote pledge cards for anti-vivisectionists to carry asking not to be given any drug or treatment that has been tested on animals. In doing so, this rather strange PR stunt completely misses the point. Anti-vivisectionists aren't anti-drugs or anti science. On the contrary, we believe that using non-animal techniques is a far safer and scientifically reliable method of developing drugs that will really make a difference in the treatment of human illnesses. Most drugs have been tested on animals, but this does not mean that they could not have been developed in other, more humane ways.

Unfortunately almost everything in modern society has been tested on animals at one point or another. The dye in the carpet we walk on, the chemicals in the plastics from which our computers are made, the colouring in our food, even water. Clearly, it is impossible to live without water and unless all anti-vivisectionists condemn themselves to a virtually hermitic lifestyle excluding all interaction with the outside world, it is clearly impossible as citizens to either explicitly or implicitly avoid animal testing altogether. It is to the advantage of only the pro-vivisectionist to convince those who object to vivisection, that a pre-requisite for that position is total abstention from pharmaceuticals. That simply is not a valid argument because its only logical conclusion is that we should in fact abstain from everything.

There may well be reasonable health limits to how far an individual can boycott certain products such as prescription drugs, and certainly limits to how far any of us can totally eliminate animal testing from our lives. Sometimes that's a matter of personal choice, other times it's a matter of medical necessity. As anti-vivisectionists we cannot alter what has been done to animals in the past, against our wishes – in years past the UK city of Liverpool was the centre of the British slave trade responsible for the suffering and death of thousands of individuals around the world, but boycotting Liverpool won't bring those lives back. The important point is that animal testing should stop now and for the future.

- **If we didn't test on animals, wouldn't we have to test on people?**

No absolutely not. We don't have to choose between testing on animals and testing on humans and no anti-vivisectionist would ever suggest that as a solution. It is certainly true that one of the fundamental problems with using animal experiments is the difficulty in extrapolating results from one species to another, and so the goal with replacing animal experiments is to find methods that are more biologically relevant. But that certainly doesn't involve invasive experiments on live humans!

There are a huge range of sophisticated, advanced non-animal research techniques such as computer simulations, cell, tissue or organ cultures, complex artificial systems, epidemiology, QSARs or brain imaging that utilise human biological material or data so that the results are directly applicable to the human situation. These techniques are not only more humane but also often cheaper and quicker to perform as well as offering more relevant and reliable results.

- **Most scientists do vivisection at some point during their careers so they must agree that it is useful.**

That doesn't follow. Many scientists as they go through teaching and training will not be presented with a choice and so will find themselves pressured into performing animal experiments. Often the pressure these young scientists will experience from the University or tutors is so immense and the fear of failing their course so great, that voicing their opposition to performing animal experiments simply isn't an option. As these scientists progress through their career, they enter an establishment where animal experimentation is expected as the 'norm'. Where securing research funding can be easier if projects are more traditionally founded (i.e.: animal based) and where vociferously opposing the use of animals can make the difference between succeeding or failing in the often conservative world of scientific academia or research.

For some individuals, their experiences working in the field of animal experimentation have actively contributed to their eventual rejection of vivisection, whether on ethical or scientific grounds, or a combination of both.

- **Aren't researchers forced to use alternatives to animal research if they are available?**

In many countries, such as Japan or the USA for example, there is no legislative requirement obliging researchers to use alternatives – whether that be a refinement procedure or a total non-animal replacement method. So in those countries there is absolutely nothing stopping researchers from continuing to conduct cruel animal experiments even if a total non-animal replacement method was widely available.

In other countries, such as the UK and the rest of the EU for example, there is provision in the law to say that if an alternative method exists, it is against the law for the government to continue licensing the traditional animal method. However there are a number of issues with this.

Firstly the term 'alternative' is often misinterpreted to mean a complete non-animal replacement method when in fact it also includes methods that still involve experimenting on animals but might involve using a supposedly 'lower' species, fewer individual animals or is calculated to involve less suffering in total.

Secondly, the legal obligation to use alternatives where available relies on those alternatives being officially seen to be available, and that in itself is along and complex process. Once a non-animal method has been developed, it is then required to go through a formal validation process to demonstrate that the method is reliable, relevant and repeatable. This usually involves many layers from development, trial, further development, further trial and assessment, all of which can take many years – in some cases as many as ten or more years, particularly if funding is tight (which it invariably is for non-animal research). In the EU validation is conducted by the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM) and if a method is successful through validation it will be considered an officially validated method. But that is not the end of the story. Although the non-animal method has gone through validation (a process that most animal tests have never had to go through), that doesn't necessarily mean that it will be considered ready as a replacement method. National governments, individual EU Member States for example, are free to accept ECVAM validation as sufficient in order to discontinue licensing an animal test within their national borders if they so wish. However, more usually a further layer of acceptance is considered necessary and that involves acceptance at OECD level.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) sets and reviews the international test guidelines for all OECD countries around the world. Many countries will insist on waiting for an OECD panel to officially accept the validated non-animal method before they will consider it a replacement method. Obtaining OECD acceptance can in itself take a number of years. So whilst a non-animal method may be technically available relatively early on, because it has to go through such a convoluted and lengthy validation and acceptance process, it can actually take many years before it is officially considered available to replace its equivalent animal test. That means that animals will continue to die in labs for years even though a suitable non-animal test could be available to replace them, victims of a system that is unnecessarily slow, lengthy and lacking in sufficient urgency and focus.

In addition, even though EU legislation dictates that alternative methods must be used where available, in practice enforcement of this is weak and punishments for researchers who disobey the law are usually minimal. For example, the BUAV has twice successfully threatened the UK government with legal action for misapplying the law relating to alternatives. The BUAV also regularly comes across published research papers where animal experiments have been performed in areas such as fundamental (curiosity driven) research despite the fact that there were very obvious and more appropriate non-animal methods of research that could have been used instead. We have even encountered examples where researchers at one University were conducting animal experiments into a particular condition despite the fact that at the same University there was a separate set of researchers looking at exactly the same condition but doing so using entirely non-animal methods.

- **Don't animal experiments help animals by advancing veterinary science?**

The BUAV's ethical objection to animal experiments is as valid for the area of veterinary research as it is for any other area of vivisection. We believe that it is not morally acceptable to deliberately inflict pain or suffering on a sentient animal when not for its benefit. Deliberately subjecting twenty cats to painful, invasive and even lethal experiments, in the hope of discovering something that could potentially help all cats, is no more morally acceptable than subjecting twenty humans to painful or lethal experiments in the hope of helping all human beings.

It is also important to understand precisely what is meant by veterinary research. The general public usually perceives this to be fairly benign research which will directly benefit their own pet cat or dog. In fact, the term veterinary research can be used to cover all sorts of experiments that have nothing to do with pet welfare. For example experiments for the greyhound or horse racing industry can be included under the term 'veterinary research'; so can farm animal research aimed at increasing yields, or experiments by commercial pet food companies. These kinds of experiments are not necessarily

about improving animal welfare at all but about selling products and finding more ways of exploiting already exploited animals in order to further benefit humans, usually financially.

- **Animal rights groups show horrific pictures of animal experiments, but how do I know they haven't been faked?**

Animal experiments are horrific and invariably photographs or footage taken of animal experiments will depict scenes of suffering or show animals that have been injured, mutilated or deliberately made ill. These images make for uncomfortable viewing but just because it is uncomfortable to watch doesn't mean it is not true. Sometimes it is easier to tell ourselves that something disturbing isn't true because the reality is so upsetting. But the only way we can tackle and change upsetting situations is to face up to them, and that means we have to educate ourselves as to exactly what is going on.

Here in the UK animal experiments are shrouded in secrecy. Unlike in other countries like the USA, animal experiments are not included in the Freedom of Information Act. For the most part animal experiments are conducted behind closed doors, in secret and away from the unwelcome glare of public scrutiny. The only way that the general public are given useful and reliable evidence to see for themselves what animals really endure, is when groups like the BUAV conduct undercover investigations and publicise film or photographs of what we have found. The results are usually shocking.

The response by the company that has been exposed, or by pro-vivisection PR organisations like the Research Defence Society, is usually to deny that the images are real or to try to explain them away as 'fake' or just a one-off and not indicative of the industry as a whole. None of these are true.

The BUAV is a highly professional, experienced organisation that has been specialising in undercover investigations around the world for well over a decade. Without exception, in every investigation that we have conducted we have uncovered laws being broken, guidelines ignored and immense animal suffering. The industry has always attempted to explain away our evidence by claiming that each case was an isolated incident, but after so many years of consistently revealing the same type of damning evidence, it is clear that such excuses are utterly groundless.

Claiming that the images are fake is sadly another well known tactic used by an animal research industry increasingly embarrassed by the BUAV's ability to catch it out. This is really an attempt to damage the BUAV's credibility, done in the hope that if the public is trained to question the authenticity of the evidence, it will be reassured that animal experiments are not really that bad at all. The truth is that the BUAV has never and would never fake any undercover material, and the research industry is fully aware of the fact that the reason why BUAV material has such impact is that it comes from a well-respected and professional organisation.

Moral codes aside, there actually wouldn't be any need to fake evidence because the reality of animal experimentation is disturbing enough. And it is because the BUAV consistently exposes those scenes that the research industry has had to resort to such pathetic excuses in much the same way that exploitative regimes deny torture or human rights abuses, despite evidence having been obtained from well-respected campaigning groups. It is always much easier to deny something is true rather than face up to your mistakes and attempt to put things right.

- **Is dissection at school obligatory?**

All children from the age of five years upwards in the UK will study science throughout their primary and secondary education, but there is no specific requirement for dissection at any stage of the National Curriculum, nor is it a compulsory component of any GCSE course. But whilst no pupil under 16 years old is specifically required to dissect, many may be expected to perform dissection by their teacher.

If this is the case, let your parents/teacher know that you intend to refuse and would like a non-animal

alternative to be offered. This could be an opportunity to work with your teachers to establish a student choice policy. Remember you have the right to refuse to dissect on the grounds of conscience. You should not be forced to watch if you do not wish to, nor should you be penalised for your views.

Whilst no GCSE course requires dissection, the situation with A' level is slightly different. Dissection is no longer a compulsory feature of many A' level syllabuses and there has been a general move away from set practical exams, to teacher assessment of coursework, with teachers free to make their own choice of practical work. This of course makes it easier for teachers to omit dissection at A' level, but it can still be included by those who favour it. The Associated Examining Board, The Joint Matriculation Board and the University of Cambridge Board do not specify that dissection is required and leave teachers free to include it or not. Some courses still require dissection of a mammal (usually a mouse or rat), but make provision for objectors by providing acceptable alternatives (e.g. Oxford and Cambridge, and The Welsh Joint Education Committee). In the London Board requirements, since 1992 pupils have not had a practical exam and the inclusion of the dissection of a small mammal, formerly on the required coursework list, has been removed.
So if you are doing A' levels choose a board where it is not compulsory. Write to the board to find out its exact policy on dissection and question them if it is compulsory.

Check out the BUAV's Dissection fact sheet for more information.

• Are all products claiming "not tested on animals" genuinely cruelty-free?

No. Ethical consumers are bombarded with often misleading 'cruelty-free' claims by companies or undeserved 'cruelty-free' endorsements by other ethical shopping guides. That's why maintaining the integrity of the BUAV's endorsements are so important. The BUAV runs three ethical consumer schemes: the Humane Cosmetics Standard, the Humane Household Products Standard and the 'No Animal Testing' Pet Food Standard, plus our Health With Humanity Charities Guide – all of which contain accurate and reliable information.

The BUAV will never 'approve' a company as 'not animal tested' purely based on their own corporate animal testing statement, as this can so often prove to be misleading. As well as not conducting or commissioning animal testing themselves of course, approved companies are required to produce verifiable proof that animal testing has been eliminated from their supply chain too by submitting supplier assurances and agreeing to be independently audited.

Many companies can be deliberately misleading in their animal testing statements, cleverly wording customer letters in order to reassure a concerned public. Even a 'cruelty-free' label on a seemingly environmentally friendly or vegan-ingredient product is no automatic guarantee that the ingredients have not been animal tested. Sometimes this is wilful misinformation, other times its just ignorance about what being 'not animal tested' actually means. Our years of experience have taught us that companies can even be guilty of claiming to operate a fixed cut-off date when in fact they have no mechanisms in place to ensure that their ingredient suppliers comply with it. The only way to know for sure if a product is genuinely 'not tested on animals' is to check it out with the BUAV.

• What is a fixed cut-off date?

This means that a product manufacturer will not buy finished products or ingredients (from suppliers) that have been animal tested after a fixed date e.g.: 1987. This rule draws a clear line under animal testing, and is the only method by which manufacturers can send a clear message to their suppliers and the rest of the industry that the company is not prepared to profit from laboratory animal suffering. If a company does not use a fixed cut-off date for the ingredients it buys (even if it claims not to test on animals itself), it still profits from animal suffering because it is continuing to buy ingredients that have been animal tested and it helps to perpetuate the market for animal tested ingredients.

- **What is a five year rolling rule?**

This means that the manufacturer only excludes ingredients that have been animal-tested within the last five years. This is not a fixed date, so an animal tested ingredient may be excluded one year (because it falls within the 'last five years' bracket), but included the following year when it falls outside this bracket. By using this method, the manufacturer is making no clear commitment to reject animal testing and is still profiting from and perpetuating animal testing. The only difference here is that the company delays buying that ingredient for five years. This would make little difference to most suppliers and the industry as a whole, as they know that companies like this may not buy the ingredients today but they will buy the ingredients eventually. The BUAV does not endorse five year rolling rules.

For more information or if you have any further questions please contact:
The British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection
16a Crane Grove
London
N7 8NN
Tel: 020 7700 4888
Fax: 020 7700 0252
E-mail: info@buav.org
Web: www.buav.org

August 2004