Key Facts Q&A

The scale and scope of the problem
Q: How often does animal testing take place in this day and age? Isn't it just a few rats that are occasionally tested on? **A:** Unfortunately, the scope and scale of animal testing is much greater than most people realise. There were over 2.7 million procedures on animals in this country and we have estimated at least 190 million uses of animals each year across the globe. It's not just rats either. It's also cats, dogs, monkeys, fish, birds, guinea pigs to name just a few.
Understanding Alternatives to Animal Testing
Q: What are the alternatives to animal testing? **A:** Non-animal test methods have already replaced some tests on animals. Cutting-edge innovations are bringing new non-animal approaches forward, such as 3D cell cultures, organs-on-chips, and advanced computer models. Non-animal methods can be more accurate and cost-effective, and are certainly more humane. This shift is already embraced by companies like XcellR8, a UK-based testing service provider which only uses non-animal methods, and a number of UK based companies who manufacture non-animal testing equipment Unfortunately, even where there are alternatives they sometimes aren't used, even though there is a legal requirement to use them when they are available.
The Persistence of Animal Testing
Q: Why is animal testing still conducted if alternatives exist? **A:** It's not one single thing. Factors include a cultural problem, on top of a lack of dedicated funding, plus a need for change in the legal system relating to the use of animals in scientific experiments. We need more people working in the sciences and governmental departments who know about non animal methods, as well as more work to develop non-animal approaches. Finally, we need to ensure that we have a well-functioning and efficient system for understanding and trusting new non-animal methods. Testing on animals is often seen as the default approach with the result that both the research community, as well as the governmental authorities who require new tests to be conducted, can be resistant to change. Often, they don't know enough about non-animal methods to understand how and when there are opportunities to replace more established tests which use animals. Overcoming this requires a shift in funding and education which prioritises the development, and routine use, of non-animal approaches.
Safety and Scientific Progress

Key Facts Q&A

Q: Will phasing out animal testing compromise safety or scientific breakthroughs?

A: No. Typically, animal tests have never been shown to be reliable and have not undergone the same degree of validation that newer non-animal methods have. In fact, we do know that testing on animals can yield unreliable results. We believe that if the established tests on animals had been held to the same degree of scrutiny that non-animal methods are today, testing on animals would not have been so readily accepted.

Prioritising human-relevant non-animal methods has the potential to enhance the protection of human health and the environment, and could lead to more successful scientific breakthroughs. In the long term, transitioning fully to non-animal methods will improve product safety and, in the case of medicines, performance too.

Addressing Patient Group Concerns

Q: What about patient groups who fear a halt in progress towards cures?

A: It's vital to recognise the urgency of their needs. However, sticking to ineffective and unreliable animal testing methods doesn't serve patients well. After decades of using animals for research into cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, diabetes, and many of the world's most deadly diseases, we still await a cure, and in some cases don't even have effective treatments. Embracing innovative technologies is not only ethical but could also speed up the development of effective treatments.

Economic Implications

Q: Is the transition to non-animal testing methods costly?

A: Drug development is already incredibly expensive. A new drug can cost over $2 billion and 10 or more years to be developed and made available. On average, 46 new medicines are released onto the market every year – but many are withdrawn after release. We need more reliable testing to stop wasting money.

There are billions of pounds of research funding in the the UK system and just 0.02% of it goes towards research into non-animal approaches. Redirecting even just a small amount of existing research funds towards non-animal methods can stimulate progress without substantial new expenses. With strategic investment and political will, we can support this transition and potentially unlock billions of pounds economic benefits in the emerging and growing sector of non-animal research.

Immediate Actions

Q: Can we take immediate steps to reduce animal testing?

A: Yes, the uptake and use of existing, validated non-animal methods could immediately replace certain animal tests. For example, our Replace Animal Test (RAT) list for the UK shows six animal tests with validated alternatives that could stop right away, saving tens of thousands of animals from unnecessary testing each year.

Legislative and Regulatory Change

Q: What role does government play in ending animal testing?

A: Strong political leadership is essential. By prioritising and incentivising non-animal research, setting clear directives, and updating regulatory frameworks, the government can drive the transition towards a more ethical and scientifically advanced approach to research and testing.

Key Facts Q&A

Global Positioning
Q: How would ending animal testing affect the UK's global scientific standing? **A:** The UK has the opportunity to be a global leader in ethical, human-relevant science. Investing in non-animal methods aligns with the UK's reputation for innovation and can contribute significantly to the economy, with the potential to add billions to GDP. Many of our neighbours and allies around the world are already making advancements in this area. If we get stuck in the mud then we will lag behind and miss the opportunity to invest in something that can bring huge benefits to this country.