

Creating a cruelty-free future

**The Labour government's first steps to
phasing out animal testing**

Introduction

The new Labour government committed in its election manifesto to “*work towards the phasing out of animal testing*”¹ and in earlier statements committed to publishing a roadmap to end the use of animals in the scientific testing of products². This document outlines the first concrete steps that can be taken by the government towards delivering on these commitments.

These proposals represent priority actions that a government which takes the ending of animal testing seriously must act upon in the early stages of its tenure. None of these proposals require the introduction of new laws or major additional expenditure, and can be started without delay.

In taking these steps, the government can set the long-term trajectory and establish clear expectations while taking advantage of early wins and laying the foundations for future success.

¹ Change, Labour Party Manifesto 2024: <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Change-Labour-Party-Manifesto-2024-large-print.pdf>

² Daily Mirror, Labour manifesto will promise to phase out animal testing and close fox hunting loopholes, 7 June 2024: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/labour-manifesto-promise-end-animal-32986403>

Establish the phase-out as a priority across government

Appoint a Minister for Animals in Science

Action: Appoint a dedicated Minister for Animals in Science, encompassing the transition away from testing on animals, the progression of non-animal science, and the protection of animals in laboratories. This Minister will lead the transition towards animal-free science and innovation across government.

Impact: Focused and accountable leadership, to drive policy and coordinate strategy across government departments.

Make a statement of intent

Action: The newly-appointed Minister for Animals in Science should issue an unequivocal statement committing the government to the objective of eliminating animal testing across the UK as early as possible.

Impact: An essential first step which sets the tone for the government's position and prioritises the objective across all departments.

Enhance policy coordination

Launch a Cross-Government Taskforce

Action: Establish a Cross-Government Taskforce to review existing regulations and practices, and shape the development of a transformation strategy. Membership should include representatives from government departments, regulatory bodies, legal experts, industry, academia, consumer groups, and civil society. Its remit should include ways to tackle wastage in the system; ending redundant tests; making the harm-benefit principle fit for purpose; evaluating the scope of a targets-based approach; and identifying early wins in key areas, such as regulatory testing.

Impact: Creates a unified approach to reforming regulations and sets a clear commitment to identifying opportunities to reduce animal tests.

Publish a list of redundant tests

Action: Publish a list of animal tests that are redundant or have accepted non-animal replacements, using Cruelty Free International's Replace Animal Tests (RAT) list as a baseline, with further independent input from the newly established Cross-Government Taskforce. The list should be continually maintained and updated.

Impact: Promotes transparency, and informs regulators, researchers and the public about unnecessary testing practices, while focusing attention on readily achievable actions with clear impact.

Set a clear trajectory and establish expectations

Announce an ambitious transformation strategy

Action: Confirm plans to develop a comprehensive, targeted strategy for the phase-out of testing on animals, including immediate actions to reduce the number of animals used, foundational steps towards a new approach to regulation, and a long-term roadmap. A practical, phased approach should prioritise areas such as regulatory testing, including for cosmetics and wider chemicals, where public support, clear regulatory frameworks, and industry collaboration can be used to maximise impact.

Impact: Co-ordinating government, industry, and academia to work together to make policy, set targets, and allocate resources. By setting a clear trajectory, government can support key stakeholders to make decisions in areas such as funding, training, and investment.

Set targets

Action: Building on the announcement of the transformation strategy, the Minister for Animals in Science should make a formal statement clarifying the intention to set targets and timelines for the implementation of measures to deliver progress in priority areas. These should include, sector-specific tests, excessively harmful experiments, redundant and wasteful practices, and tests conducted on key species.

Impact: Increase confidence that the phase out will be planned and delivered in phases, with actions measured against specific indicators and timelines.

Make the Harm-Benefit Process fit for purpose

Action: The Minister for Animals in Science makes a formal statement clarifying the intention to improve the evaluation of projects using animals, including by reviewing the Harm-Benefit Process to ensure it is robust, thorough, and reflects public opinion. This action should be delivered as part of the transformation strategy and the work of the Cross-Government Taskforce.

Impact: Industry, academia, and those who seek to use animals in scientific procedures will know that the evaluation of projects using animals will fully account for the harm to animals, and accurately reflect both public opinion and scientific understanding of the purported benefits. Ultimately, this process should lead to a clear reduction in the number of animal experiments.

Use fiscal measures to drive coordinated action

Reprioritise funding through the first Budget

Action: Use the government's first Budget to reprioritise existing funding towards the development and validation of non-animal testing methods, including funding and resourcing an Animal-Free Science Innovation Hub and diverting funds from traditional animal-based research. Draw on the expertise of the Cross-Government Taskforce to develop a targeted approach.

Impact: Accelerates the development of humane, human-relevant scientific methods and sends a clear message to industry and academia about government priorities.

Reform R&D tax incentives

Action: At the same Budget, drawing on the expertise of the Cross-Government Taskforce, introduce targeted reform of R&D tax incentives to promote the development of non-animal testing methods.

Impact: Provides financial incentives for companies to adopt and develop alternative testing methods, as well as the infrastructure investment needed for a full, longer-term transition.

Drive innovation and create opportunities for collaboration

Establish an Animal-Free Science Innovation Hub

Action: Initiate a partnership between government, academia, industry and civil society to establish an Animal-Free Science Innovation Hub that is funded by reprioritised R&D spend and provides a natural home for new funding towards scientific research and innovation. The Hub should draw on the lessons of successful initiatives such as the Dutch government's Transition Programme for Innovation, and EU-wide collaborations, to promote the development, validation and uptake of animal free science.

Impact: Drives innovation in non-animal methods, and supports the collaboration required to bring consistent changes across industry, academia, and regulatory bodies. This work will ultimately deliver better results in areas of high priority, such as human health and environmental protection.

Conclusion

The early weeks and months of a new government, with a strong majority and a clear manifesto commitment, offer a unique opportunity to make significant strides towards ending animal testing in the UK. By taking bold yet practical steps, the government can demonstrate its commitment to modern ethical science, further align itself with public opinion, and set the stage for a future where animal testing is a relic of the past.

Achieving a cruelty-free future, liberated from the restrictions of animal-based science, is an ambitious but achievable mission. It will require long-term, clear-eyed planning and diligent delivery, based on partnerships across sectors and disciplines, but driven by decisive government actions. This document provides the building blocks of a strong foundation on which this future can be built, and Cruelty Free International stands ready to support the government in this transformative mission.

Contact us

For more information please contact Dylan Underhill, Head of Public Affairs (UK & EU):
dylan.underhill@crueltyfreeinternational.org