

Govt gives go ahead to revised non-animal tests to check pesticide safety

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New Delhi: In a move that could spare many animals from pain and death in crude 1940s-era experiments, the Registration Committee of the Central Insecticide Board under India’s Ministry of Agriculture has revised its pesticide testing regulations to recognize modern, human cell-based alternatives to rabbit tests for the assessment of eye and skin irritation.

This decision comes after more than two years of campaigning by Humane Society International, India and negotiations between it and the members of the pesticide industry as well as PETA India.

The revised [“Guidance Document on Toxicology for Registration of Chemical Pesticides in India”](#) also includes language that directs companies to consider new validated alternative methods to animal testing, and changing some previously ‘unconditional’ test requirements to conditional requirements. Notoriously cruel inhalation studies, in which rats or mice are confined to whole-body restraint tubes and forced to breathe in toxic vapours for up to six

hours a day – sometimes for weeks on end or at such extreme levels to determine the chemical concentration that is lethal – are an example of a requirement that has been downgraded to conditional, meaning they may be waived going forward.

The Managing Director of HIS India, Jayasimha Nuggehalli said: “We welcome the Registration Committee’s move to replace notoriously cruel and obsolete animal pesticide tests. It has been a long journey, and there much is still left to do to bring Indian regulations in line with international best practices for reduction and replacement of animal testing for pesticides. The new regulations put India on the right path and will save countless animals from needless suffering.”

In 2016, HIS India identified a “dirty dozen” pesticide animal tests that could be ended immediately without risk to consumer or environmental safety. The recent action by the CIB-RC, as per HIS India, addresses two of these test areas, but overlooks other internationally-recognized animal-saving approaches that could spare thousands more animals for every pesticide chemical tested.

HSI India has said that it will continue its dialogue with Indian authorities and industry executives until all available animal testing alternatives are fully accepted and implemented in practice.