

## NEWS RELEASE

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# ANIMAL PROTECTION GROUP PRECIPITATES HISTORIC POLICY CHANGE AT NIH

## Hundreds of thousands of animal lives will be spared

JENKINTOWN, PA – Responding to two years of legal battles over a historically unprecedented policy change, the National Institutes of Health has announced that government funded researchers will be directed to shift to in vitro methods of producing monoclonal antibodies except in limited circumstances. It is expected that animals may be approved for use less than 10% of the time. This policy change has the potential to save up to one million animals every year currently used like test tubes to produce these commonly used substances.

The American Anti-Vivisection Society (AAVS) first petitioned NIH in 1997, with the goal of banning animal use in MAb production as has been done in the United Kingdom and several other European countries. AAVS' scientific affiliate, the Alternatives Research and Development Foundation (ARDF), had funded successful research to develop alternatives to the animal ascites method which causes painful abdominal swelling and has other disadvantages. Many readily available alternatives are already in use, especially since the announcements of qualified bans in Europe in recent years.

“NIH has taken a significant step with this response to our petition” says Tina Nelson, Executive Director of AAVS. “They acknowledged that the preponderance of scientific evidence points to the feasibility—in terms of ease of use, reliability, and cost—of the in vitro methods currently available for the vast majority of MAb production.” Ms. Nelson says that AAVS can certainly declare a qualified victory, even though NIH refused to impose a ban. “As a result of our forceful but informed advocacy and the widespread discussion it generated at scientific conferences, adoption of alternatives has come to be seen as a matter of public policy, not simply the discretion of the individual researcher.” NIH's assertion that the in vitro method should be considered the “default method” from now on is applauded by AAVS and ARDF, but concerns continue that NIH enforcement will be half-hearted. Nelson says, “We hope this announcement is a sign that they'll allocate the needed resources to ensure that researchers quickly adopt the in vitro method.” For its part, the ARDF will take the initiative by sending thousands of *MAb In Vitro Conversion Kits* to members of every Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee early next year.

Much work lies ahead in facilitating the conversion to non-animal production, but ARDF Director John McArdle is confident that the end is in sight. He says, “United States researchers are finally joining their European colleagues in ending one of the most painful and unnecessary procedures routinely carried out on laboratory animals.”

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