



September 1, 2020

Masaya Tochio
Representative Director and Corporate Senior Vice President
Ajinomoto Co., Inc.

Via e-mail: csvp_tochio@ajinomoto.com

Dear Mr. Tochio,

I am writing on behalf of PETA and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide in response to your letter dated October 23, 2019, in which you shared Ajinomoto's policy on animal testing. I would also like to respond to the company's recent roundtable meetings—which considered how it can "coexist even more harmoniously with animals' in a format that responds better to the times we live in and the expectations of society,"¹ including in its "approach to animal welfare and the status of animal testing."²

Based on the information presented below, we again urge Ajinomoto to do the following:

- 1. Revise its public policy to prohibit funding, conducting, or commissioning any animal tests, unless they are explicitly required by law, in favor of more effective, ethical, and economical non-animal methods;**
- 2. Inform PETA before pursuing any animal tests that it believes to be explicitly required by a government agency, since our international team of scientists has successfully helped companies avoid such tests.**

Ajinomoto's Animal Testing Policy Is Not in Sync With Global Standards

Ajinomoto's *Commitment to Animal Well-Being* states that "animal studies will only be performed for safety and efficacy evaluations required/recommended by authorities, evaluations of nutrient effects for humans and animals and those required by stakeholders."³ This is in stark contrast with the global trend for food and beverage companies, many of which have established policies against funding, conducting, or commissioning any animal tests, unless *explicitly* required by law, after discussions with PETA.⁴

¹Ajinomoto Co., Inc. (2020, February 13). *Ajinomoto Co., Inc. has established a roundtable dialogue to deliberate on the ways in which we coexist with animals.*

[https://www.ajinomoto.com/sustainability/news/ajinomoto-co-inc-has-established-a-roundtable-dialogue-to-deliberate-on-the-ways-in-which-we-coexist-with-animals.](https://www.ajinomoto.com/sustainability/news/ajinomoto-co-inc-has-established-a-roundtable-dialogue-to-deliberate-on-the-ways-in-which-we-coexist-with-animals)

²Ajinomoto Co., Inc. (2020, June 26). *Ajinomoto Co., Inc. holds two roundtable meetings on ways to better coexist with animals.* [https://www.ajinomoto.com/sustainability/news/ajinomoto-co-inc-holds-two-roundtable-meetings-on-ways-to-better-coexist-with-animals.](https://www.ajinomoto.com/sustainability/news/ajinomoto-co-inc-holds-two-roundtable-meetings-on-ways-to-better-coexist-with-animals)

³Ajinomoto Co., Inc. (n.d.). *Our commitment to animal well-being.* https://www.ajinomoto.com/cms/wp_ajmnt_global/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Our_commitment_to_animal_well-being.pdf.

⁴PETA. (n.d.). *Victory! Global food industry ditches deadly animal tests—see the list.* [https://www.peta.org/features/victories-food-drink-companies-refuse-animal-tests/.](https://www.peta.org/features/victories-food-drink-companies-refuse-animal-tests/)

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Some of these are Japanese companies, including Asahi Group Holdings, Ensuiko Sugar Refining Co.,⁵ Ezaki Glico Co.,⁶ Fuji Oil Holdings, House Foods Group, ITO EN, Kewpie Corporation, Kikkoman Corporation,⁷ Kirin Holdings Co., Megmilk Snow Brand Co.,⁸ Meiji Co.,⁹ Morinaga & Co., Nagase & Co.,¹⁰ NH Foods, Nippon Suisan Kaisha, Nissin Foods Holdings Co., Nitto Beverage Co., Riken Vitamin Co., Sapporo Holdings, Satake Corporation,¹¹ Suntory Holdings, Takasago International Corporation,¹² T. Hasegawa Co., Toyo Suisan Kaisha, and Yakult Honsha Co.

There is no reason why Ajinomoto cannot match the animal testing standard that these companies have set, especially since the vast majority of animal tests pursued by Ajinomoto were for establishing human health claims for food products and/or curiosity-driven basic research. These types of animal tests are not required by law, as we explained in our letter of April 25, 2018, and have little relevance or applicability to advancing human health.¹³

If Ajinomoto truly seeks to "coexist even more harmoniously with animals," it should end its cruel experiments on animals and stop misleading consumers and retailers about these tests—a move that would better reflect the times we live in and meet societal expectations.

Ajinomoto's Animal Tests Are Cruel and Do Not Advance Human Health

Ajinomoto has been tormenting thousands of dogs, fish, gerbils, guinea pigs, mice, pigs, rabbits, and rats in horrific and deadly experiments since the 1950s. For example, its experimenters have cut open dogs' stomachs and inserted tubes, starved them for 18 hours, given them liquid diets with MSG and other common amino acids, taken their stomach fluid, and injected them with drugs.¹⁴ Ajinomoto funded another study in which experimenters inserted tubes into the arteries of 1-day-old piglets, starved them for 12 hours, injected them with amino acids, repeatedly took their blood, and killed and dissected them.¹⁵ They've also fed rabbits a common amino acid, starved them, repeatedly taken their blood, and then killed and dissected them.¹⁶ In addition, Ajinomoto funded or conducted recently published experiments in which experimenters cut the nerves of rats or mice, starved them, forced them to run or swim, force-fed them, injected them with a variety of toxic cancer drugs, forced them to fight each other, electrocuted them, and cut them open. Some died as a result of botched surgeries, while others were killed and dissected.¹⁷

⁵Ensuiko Sugar Refining Co. (n.d.). *R&D activities*. <https://www.ensuiko.co.jp/lab/index.html>.

⁶Ezaki Glico Co. (n.d.). *R&D*. <https://www.glico.com/global/rd/>.

⁷Kikkoman Corporation. (n.d.). *Rational product development*. <https://www.kikkoman.com/en/quality/safety/productdevelopment.html>.

⁸Megmilk Snow Brand Co. (n.d.). *Approach to animal welfare*. <https://www.meg-snow.com/english/rd/approach-to-animal-welfare/>.

⁹Meiji Co. (n.d.). *Quality and safety*. https://www.meiji.com/global/sustainability/healthier_lives/quality_safety/.

¹⁰Nagase & Co. (n.d.). *Compliance*. <https://www.nagase.co.jp/english/sustainability/governance/compliance/>.

¹¹Satake Corporation. (n.d.). *Research and development*. <https://satake-group.com/about/rd.html>.

¹²Takasago International Corporation. (n.d.). *Position statement on animal testing*. <https://www.takasago.com/en/business/aromachemicals/animaltesting.html>.

¹³PETA. (2020). *The research modernization deal*. https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Research-Modernization-Deal-Report-US_FINAL_2020_300.pdf.

¹⁴Khropycheva, R., Andreeva, J., Uneyama, H., Torii, K., & Zolotarev, V. (2011). Dietary glutamate signal evokes gastric juice excretion in dogs. *Digestion*, *83 Suppl 1*, 7–12.

¹⁵Wilson, F. A., Suryawan, A., Gazzaneo, M. C., Orellana, R. A., Nguyen, H. V., & Davis, T. A. (2010). Stimulation of muscle protein synthesis by prolonged parenteral infusion of leucine is dependent on amino acid availability in neonatal pigs. *The Journal of Nutrition*, *140*(2), 264–270.

¹⁶Geison, R. L., & Waisman, H. A. (1970). Plasma and tissue cholesterol and lipid levels in rabbits on L-histidine-supplemented diets. *Proceedings of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine*, *133*(1), 234–237.

¹⁷PETA letter to Ajinomoto on April 25, 2018.

Animal testing is not an effective, ethical, or economic means of advancing human health. Novel drugs that test safe and effective in preclinical experiments using animals go on to fail in about 95% of human studies.¹⁸ Fewer than 10% of highly promising basic science discoveries enter routine clinical use within 20 years.¹⁹ A 2015 investigation concluded that between 50% and 89% of all preclinical research, a large part of which involves animal testing, could not even be reproduced from one laboratory to the next.²⁰ At the most conservative U.S. estimate, this results in spending of approximately \$28 billion per year on experimentation whose results are misleading.

Ajinomoto Has Misled Consumers and Retailers on Animal Testing

Ajinomoto has repeatedly issued statements that may mislead consumers to believe that its products are not tested on animals.²¹ Ajinomoto North America—the group's U.S. subsidiary—has claimed that its "products are not tested on animals and haven't been in over 20 years,"²² even though Ajinomoto's animal tests for its MSG and bonito broth products were published as recently as 2019²³ and 2020,²⁴ respectively. Kroger—a U.S. grocery chain that sells your packaged frozen food brands Tai Pei, Ling Ling, and José Olé—also told us, "We have confirmed with Ajinomoto that the products they produce for Kroger have never had animal testing conducted on them,"²⁵ even though ingredients in these products have been tested on animals by Ajinomoto.

For example, Ajinomoto experimenters fed rats cornmeal with casein and soy protein, repeatedly took their blood, starved them overnight, and then killed and dissected them.²⁶ In another test, experimenters killed mice who had colitis; injected cells from the dead animals into another group of mice; fed them soybeans, corn, wheat, fish meal, or milk; and then killed and dissected them.²⁷

Consumers Demand Change

More than 124,000 consumers have voiced their opposition to Ajinomoto's cruel and wasteful animal tests,²⁸ and global public sentiment has turned against this junk science.

¹⁸National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences. (2019). *Transforming translational science*.

https://ncats.nih.gov/files/NCATS_Factsheet_508.pdf.

¹⁹Contopoulos-Ioannidis, D. G., Ntzani, E., & Ioannidis, J. P. (2003). Translation of highly promising basic science research into clinical applications. *The American Journal of Medicine*, 114(6), 477–484.

²⁰Freedman, L. P., Cockburn, I. M., & Simcoe, T. S. (2015). The economics of reproducibility in preclinical research. *PLoS Biology*, 13(6), e1002165.

²¹PETA. (2020, May 29). *Urge MSG flavor giant Ajinomoto to end horrific tests on dogs, others*.

<https://support.peta.org/page/14048/action/1?locale=en-US>.

²²*Ibid.*

²³Blais, A., Rochefort, G. Y., Moreau, M., Calvez, J., Wu, X., Matsumoto, H., & Blachier, F. (2019). Monosodium glutamate supplementation improves bone status in mice under moderate protein restriction. *JBMR Plus*, 3(10), e10224.

²⁴Kondoh, T., & Matsunaga, T. (2020). Intake and preference for dried bonito *dashi* in male Sprague-Dawley rats and C57BL/6 N mice. *Physiology & Behavior*, 213, 112708.

²⁵PETA. (2020, May 29).

²⁶Furuta, C., & Murakami, H. (2018). A novel concept of amino acid supplementation to improve the growth of young malnourished male rats. *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism*, 72(3), 231–240.

²⁷Kawaguchi, T., Mori, M., Saito, K., Suga, Y., Hashimoto, M., Sako, M., Yoshimura, N., Uo, M., Danjo, K., Ikenoue, Y., Oomura, K., Shinozaki, J., Mitsui, A., Kaijura, T., Suzuki, M., & Takazoe, M. (2015). Food antigen-induced immune responses in Crohn's disease patients and experimental colitis mice. *Journal of Gastroenterology*, 50(4), 394–405.

²⁸PETA. (2020, May 29).

The majority (52%) of U.S. adults oppose the use of animals in scientific research,²⁹ and 67% are concerned or very concerned about the well-being of animals in laboratories.³⁰ The majority (66%) of adults in European Union member states think the European Union should immediately end *all* animal testing.³¹ Japan Laboratory Animals, Inc. (日本医科学動物資材研究所), one of the biggest breeders and suppliers of animals for laboratories in Japan and the second biggest supplier of rodents for experimentation globally,³² filed for bankruptcy earlier this year, reportedly owing to increasing consumer opposition to animal experimentation and the company's failure to adapt to the times.³³ Globally, the vast majority (74%) of consumers "crave greater transparency in how companies source their products ... and their stance on important issues such as animal testing."³⁴

Animal testing is an unscientific, crude, and expensive century-old paradigm that doesn't provide human-relevant results, and animal testing for foods is just as frivolous and obsolete as it is for cosmetics. We urge you to update Ajinomoto's *Commitment to Animal Well-Being* policy to eliminate all animal testing, unless *explicitly* required by law.

Please respond by September 30, 2020. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



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²⁹Strauss, M. (2018, August 16). *Americans are divided over the use of animals in scientific research*. Pew Research Center Fact Tank. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/16/americans-are-divided-over-the-use-of-animals-in-scientific-research/>.

³⁰Riffkin, R. (2015, May 18). *In U.S., more say animals should have same rights as people*. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/183275/say-animals-rights-people.aspx>.

³¹Savanta ComRes. (2020, July 17). *Cruelty Free Europe – animal testing in the EU*. <https://comresglobal.com/polls/cruelty-free-europe-animal-testing-in-the-eu/>.

³²Wu, Yuxian. (2020, June 17). *Consumers' attitudes change, animal experiments are greatly reduced, and a Japanese large animal experiment supplier declare bankruptcy*. Animal-Friendly.co. <https://animal-friendly.co/2020/06/17/japan-company-broke/>.

³³Nikkan Kogyo Shimbun. (2020, June). *No mice, no dogs ... "external pressure" when breeders and sellers of experimental animals were forced into bankruptcy*. <https://newsswitch.jp/p/22645>.

³⁴Accenture. (2018, December 5). *Majority of consumers buying from companies that take a stand on issues they care about and ditching those that don't, Accenture study finds*. <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/majority-of-consumers-buying-from-companies-that-take-a-stand-on-issues-they-care-about-and-ditching-those-that-dont-accenture-study-finds.htm>.