



April 11, 2024

Michelle Korsmo
President and CEO
National Restaurant Association

Dear Ms. Korsmo:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing to you on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters worldwide—to share disturbing information about cruel and deadly experiments on dogs, mice, and other animals that are not required by law but are pursued and supported anyway by Ajinomoto Co. Inc., a company whose products the National Restaurant Association is recognizing with several 2024 Food and Beverage Awards. Ajinomoto's animal testing policy is not in line with the norms of the global food and beverage industry.

Based on the information described below, we ask that you reconsider recognizing Ajinomoto until it agrees to prohibit funding, conducting, commissioning, and allowing all tests on animals unless they're explicitly required by law, in favor of more effective, ethical, and economical non-animal methods, as dozens of food and beverage companies such as B&G Foods,¹ Barilla,² Heineken,³ McCain Foods,⁴ and Monde Nissin Corporation⁵ have already done after discussions with PETA.

Ajinomoto has conducted crude and harmful curiosity-driven experiments on animals to establish human health claims for marketing products. None of these tests on animals is required by law.

Although Ajinomoto claims in its policy that “[f]or products including seasonings, processed foods, frozen foods and drinks” it “does not test on animals,” the company has repeatedly violated this provision. (See the two 2024 tests described below.) In addition, its policy has troubling loopholes that allow for numerous experiments on animals not required by law.⁶ Ajinomoto subsidiaries have also released misleading statements claiming that the company's “products are not tested on animals and haven't been in over 20

¹B&G Foods. Animal Welfare. Retrieved April 11, 2024, from <https://bgfoods.com/about/responsibility/>.

²Barilla. Animal Welfare. Retrieved April 11, 2024, from <https://www.barillagroup.com/en/press-room/position/animal-welfare/>.

³Heineken. Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved April 11, 2024, from <https://www.heineken.com/global/en/faq>.

⁴McCain Foods. Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved April 11, 2024, from <https://www.mccain.com/information-centre/faqs/>.

⁵Quorn. Quorn FAQ's. Retrieved April 11, 2024, from <https://www.quorn.us/faqs/company>.

⁶Ajinomoto. Commitment to Minimizing Animal Testing. (1 April 2021.) Retrieved April 11, 2024, from https://www.ajinomoto.com/sustainability/keyword/animal_protection.php.

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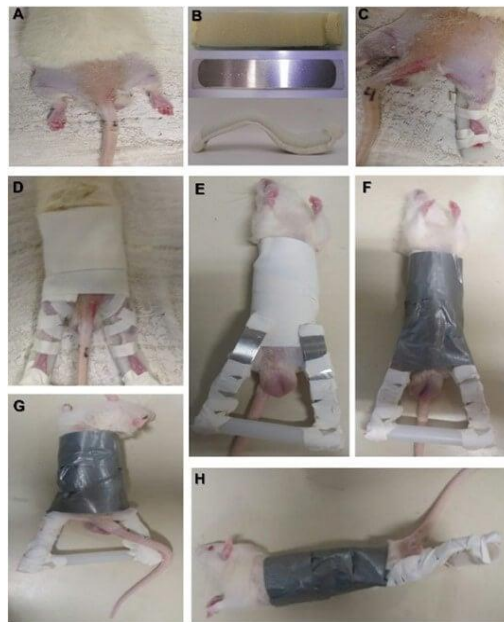
Entities

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

years.⁷ However, this is incorrect—the company has continued to contribute to animal testing for its food and seasoning products as recently as 2024:

- Ajinomoto experimenters have cut open dogs' stomachs, inserted tubes, starved the animals, fed them Ajinomoto's star product monosodium glutamate (MSG), taken their stomach fluid, and injected them with drugs.⁸
- The company funded a 2024 study in which experimenters forced small mice into cages with larger, more aggressive ones and allowed the larger animals to attack the smaller ones; deprived the smaller mice of food and water; forced them to drink experimental liquids that contained MSG; took blood from the animals; killed them; and dissected them.⁹
- In another 2024 study funded by Ajinomoto, experimenters duct-taped rats to a device that stretched their legs apart to the fullest extent and prevented them from moving their torso, hips, legs, and feet—effectively paralyzing them from the chest down and forcing their muscles to deteriorate, repeatedly force-fed the rats Ajinomoto's glutamine and other amino acids products, cut off their heads in a guillotine to kill them, and dissected them.¹⁰ Below is a photo of the immobilization procedure used in the experiment.¹¹

Immobilization protocol details



⁷NC Technical Services. (6 November 2019). E-mail correspondence with Ajinomoto North America.

⁸Khropycheva, 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.

⁹Tu, K., Zhou, M., Tan, J.J., Markos, L., Cloud, C., Zhou, M., ... & Wang, H. (2024). Chronic social defeat stress broadly inhibits gene expression in the peripheral taste system and alters taste responses in mice. *Physiology & Behavior*, 275, 114446.

¹⁰Petry, É.R., de Freitas Dresch, D., Carvalho, C., Medeiros, P.C., Rosa, T.G., de Oliveira, C.M., ... & Wannmacher, C.M.D. (2024). Oral glutamine supplementation relieves muscle loss in immobilized rats, altering p38MAPK and FOXO3a signaling pathways. *Nutrition*, 118, 112273.

¹¹Petry, É.R., de Freitas Dresch, D., Carvalho, C., Medeiros, P.C., Rosa, T.G., de Oliveira, C.M., ... & Wannmacher, C.M.D. (2019). Oral glutamine supplementation attenuates inflammation and oxidative stress-mediated skeletal muscle protein content degradation in immobilized rats: Role of 70 kDa heat shock protein. *Free Radical Biology and Medicine*, 145, 87–102.

Significant physiological differences among species make the results obtained in these tests on animals irrelevant to humans. Experiments using common food ingredients with no toxicity concerns can be safely conducted on human subjects—and the results would be directly applicable to human health. Numerous studies of this kind, as well as ones using *in vitro* and other sophisticated, non-animal methods, have already been conducted and published.

So far, more than 345,000 concerned consumers have voiced their opposition to Ajinomoto's animal tests.¹²

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. You can contact me at FrancesC@peta.org. I look forward to your response by May 1.

Sincerely,



Frances Cheng, Ph.D.
Chief Scientist, International Laboratory Methods
Laboratory Investigations Department

¹²PETA. Urge MSG flavor giant Ajinomoto to end horrific tests on dogs, others. (October 2019). Retrieved April 11, 2024, from <https://support.peta.org/page/14048/action/1?locale=en-US>.