



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

4700 River Road  
Riverdale, MD  
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SEP 30 2010



Dr. Linda S. Birnbaum  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
National Institutes of Health  
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences  
Post Office Box 12233  
Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709

Dear Dr. Birnbaum:

Thank you for your letter of September 2, 2010, to Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack regarding test method evaluation reports and recommendations from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods (ICCVAM).

We provided these ICCVAM reports and recommendations on alternative methods and strategies proposed to further reduce and refine the use of animals for assessing the ocular hazard potential of chemicals and products to scientists with our Agency's Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB) for their consideration. CVB conducts a limited amount of animal testing in accordance with its responsibilities under the Virus-Serum-Toxin Act (VSTA) to ensure that veterinary vaccines and biologics are pure, safe, potent, and effective. It is the only regulatory unit within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that requires animal testing.

After reviewing the information, our officials determined that the reports and recommendations do not apply to the safety testing done under the mandates of the VSTA for veterinary biologicals. However, we certainly appreciate the opportunity to review these materials and assure you that we will assist in transmitting ICCVAM's recommendations to the regulated animal research community. Our Agency will post links to the committee's recommendations on the Web site of the Animal Welfare Information Center at <http://awic.nal.usda.gov/alternatives/> as a resource for investigators considering alternatives to painful or distressful procedures in animals. In addition, we will inform the inspectors in our Animal Care program that these test recommendations and the agencies' responses will be made available on the National Toxicology Program's Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicological Methods-ICCVAM Web site.



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Thank you again for providing this information. USDA continues to encourage the development and use of methods that reduce, refine, or replace animal testing while ensuring the scientifically valid results necessary for regulatory testing requirements.

We look forward to receiving more such recommendations from ICCVAM.

Sincerely,

/s/

José R. Díez  
Associate Deputy Administrator  
Emergency Management  
Veterinary Services