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November 06, 2006

Fake skin breakthrough

By Lewis Smith

AN ARTIFICIAL skin has been developed which allows scientists to assess the effect of pesticides on ticks without having to use live mammals.

Thousands of experiments involving animals could be rendered unnecessary by the invention, its creators hope.

The fake skin consists of a silicone membrane and hair over a layer of cow's blood and is realistic enough to convince ticks to set up home on it. Vicky Robinson, of the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research, said: "This research demonstrates that finding ways to reduce the use of animals in research and testing is as much about improving the science as it is about considering the welfare of animals."

More than 10,000 animals are used each year in experiments designed to test the effect of pesticides

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aims at killing ticks, which transmit a range of crippling illnesses including Lyme disease.



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