

Cosmetics giants 'misled public', says \$100m lawsuit

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Two major cosmetics brands that champion their cruelty-free ethics are facing a lawsuit claiming they misled the public as they allow animal-testing on some products abroad.

Avon and Estée Lauder, which stopped animal testing in the UK two decades ago, sell cosmetics in China, where animal-testing of cosmetic ingredients is required by law.

Last week, Avon, which sells £6bn of cosmetics worldwide annually, changed its British website, which stated that it stopped animal testing more than two decades ago, to remove all traces of the claim, after a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority.

In the US, five women have launched a legal action against the companies and are seeking \$100m (£63.8m) in compensation. Their lawyer, Michael Avenatti, said: "There is nothing forcing these companies to sell products in China, and if these brands don't take a stand against inhumane policies, then nothing forces the policies to change. My clients purchased products believing the companies were not involved in animal testing while these brands were allowing testing in China to reap in profits."

If successful, the case could have serious repercussions for global cosmetics marketing.

Avon said: "Avon will first attempt to persuade the requesting authority to accept non-animal test data." Estée Lauder said: "Our commitment hasn't changed. Our products are not tested on animals except when absolutely mandated by law."