ATLANTIC HORSESHOE CRAB
Limulus polyphemus

Conservation status: ‘VULNERABLE’

Use in biomedical research: Substance taken from crab blood is used to detect bacterial endotoxins in vaccines, injectable medicines and medical devices.*

Use is not covered by most lab animal laws.

+500K CAPTURED EVERY YEAR
25-40% OF BLOOD IS REMOVED
8-30% ARE ESTIMATED TO DIE

Concerns:

ANIMAL WELFARE
captured, transported, handled, cleaned, restrained, kept out of water, blood taken, released

ENVIRONMENTAL
wild population decreasing; effects on foodchain

GROWING GLOBAL DEMAND FOR MEDICINES
including vaccines for COVID-19, raises serious questions around animal welfare and sustainability

The future:

REPLACING CRAB BLOOD
Synthetic alternative (rFC) - available since 2003 but debate exists over how well it detects endotoxins. Accepted by regulators in Europe. Not accepted in USA. Other alternatives are being developed.

REDUCING CRABS USED
New technology can reduce the amount of crab blood product needed - down 95%.

REDUCING SUFFERING
Better handling, less time out of the water and removing less blood could reduce mortality by +50%.

*Endotoxins can cause serious side effects including blood poisoning. If you, or your pets, have ever had an injection, you are a consumer of horseshoe crab blood.

We believe horseshoe crabs can suffer and want to see genuine commitment to replacing their use in endotoxin tests and to conserving them in the wild.

Find out more at: tinyurl.com/HorseshoeCrabReport

This research was supported by Wellcome