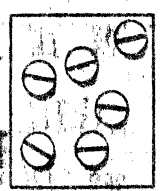


### Rat infested



The millions of pounds drug and chemical companies spend each year to make sure that their products do not cause cancer may be wasted.

The companies are required by law to subject new compounds to a battery of carcinogenicity tests. But leading toxicologists are rapidly reaching the conclusion that one of the mainstays of laboratory assessment, the rat is almost useless.

At the First International Risk Seminar held in London recently, Dr Francis Roe, toxicology consultant explained that laboratory rats are so prone to tumours that it is impossible to tell whether any chemical given to them is causing the cancers.

The problem arises because the rats are kept in abnormal conditions, he says. Often they are kept under fluorescent light, can eat all day if

they wish and frequently can smell members of the opposite sex although they cannot get near them. As a result the rats become hormonally unbalanced and riddled with hormone gland tumours

The Royal Society also recognizes this dilemma. In recent report, **Risk Assessment**, it suggests that new drugs and chemicals should be approved after more limited testing and carefully monitored.