



MSL SOLUTION PROVIDERS CASE STUDY

MSL Solution Providers is a leading testing and regulatory house, specialising in the regulatory compliance and microbiological testing of cosmetics and personal care products.

We are the UK's largest 3rd party Responsible Person, offering ISO 9001 and insurance backed regulatory services and provide a range of microbiological and stability testing services in our UKAS accredited lab (to ISO/IEC 17025 standard, Lab Ref 4045). These include Preservative Efficacy (Challenge) testing, Quality Control (Microbial Limits) testing, and stability testing.

We are also the proud founder of VeganSure®, the world's first-ever vegan testing suite. This solution enables SME and blue-chip brands around the globe to assure the safety of their vegan cosmetic products and meet UK, EU, US regulations, whilst staying true to their principles.

We have been working with the Vegan Trademark since 2019 and are proud that VeganSure was the first microbiological testing solution to be registered with it.

The need for vegan testing

Over the last decade, there has been a growing movement to lead a more ethical lifestyle – not only for animal welfare, but also for the health of the planet. One study highlighted this shift, with the majority of women surveyed (62%) stating that their conscious beauty shopping habits had significantly changed over the last five to 10 years.

This type of figure wasn't surprising to us. As a Responsible Person, we see hundreds of new products each month and had already noticed the explosion of vegan cosmetics entering the market. We very quickly realised that although products are manufactured to be vegan, they are often being tested using standard culture media and neutralisers, which are derived from animal by-products.

We developed VeganSure to offer brands a choice. This pioneering, ethical testing solution not only assures the safety of products and meets the requirements of the UK and EU Cosmetic Regulations, but also offers a truly vegan alternative. Companies can, therefore, take a 360° approach, ensuring that their products are free from any animal-derived ingredients at every step of the journey, from development and formulation to the microbiological testing process.



Whilst VeganSure is a completely vegan service, its customer base is not limited to vegan brands and manufacturers as many prepare for the green future of cosmetic development, manufacture, and testing. Plus, the fact that it provides the same results at a similar cost, with the UKAS stamp of approval, means the switch is easy for brands to make.

As end-consumers become savvier and demand ethical products, the future is looking greener than ever. From focuses on climate impact to animal protection, this ethics-based buying pattern is shifting the cosmetics market for good. Our VeganSure service enables brands to futureproof their brand and products now.

The Preservative Efficacy Test (PET)

In the UK and Europe, cosmetic products are covered by vigorous safety legislation to ensure human safety and to safeguard consumers from misleading claims regarding efficacy and other characteristics of cosmetics. The 'Preservative Efficacy Test' or 'Challenge Test' is a cornerstone of product safety and is a requirement of the Cosmetic Product Safety Report (CPSR), in order to comply with the UK Cosmetic Regulation and European Union Cosmetic Regulation 1223/2009.

This mandatory test demonstrates the efficacy of a cosmetic product's preservative system, establishing that it can withstand microbial contamination during its shelf life and once in use for a limited period of time (PAO/expiry date). As consumers use products, they introduce microorganisms which, if the preservative system is not effective, can result in contamination, spoilage, and risk consumer safety. The challenge test simulates this contamination by introducing a known number of microorganisms into the product to 'challenge' the preservative system.

This routine regulatory microbiology testing is performed using a variety of standard dehydrated culture media, the majority of which are derived from animal by-products. Being a mandatory regulatory requirement, vegan products had previously had to undergo this routine microbiology testing to ensure consumer safety. However, we very quickly noticed this disconnect between the challenge tests and vegan ethics so developed a truly animal-free alternative: VeganSure.

VeganSure replaces ALL animal-derived ingredients with plant-based or synthetic alternatives, such as papaya-derived enzymes, soya bean, plant peptones, and sugars from potatoes, to assure the safety of a cosmetic product without compromising vegan ethics. With this service we can perform all standard testing, such as ISO, USP, BP, as well as bespoke test methods in a truly vegan way, in our ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accredited testing laboratory. We also ensure separate workflows to avoid cross-contamination.



It took nearly two years of extensive research, development, and validation to ensure that VeganSure is truly vegan, without compromising the performance or results of the test.

The Vegan Trademark

As part of its registration, The Vegan Society's Trademark team assessed each component used for VeganSure and observed the protocols in place to reduce any risk of cross contamination. It confirmed that there are no animal materials, by-products or processing aids used during the test, making it suitable for its registration as 'Vegan'.

As this was such a novel concept, we wanted to align with an independent third party that is well known, recognised and trusted. The Vegan Society's Vegan Trademark is the most recognised vegan registration globally and, given its strong position in the market and well-known logo that consumers look for and trust, partnering with them was a natural choice for us.

Registration with The Vegan Society Trademark offers our customers additional reassurance that VeganSure is a recognised and trusted method of routine, regulatory testing. We have also been able to collaborate on joint marketing initiatives to reach The Vegan Society's Trademark holders and keep them updated with developments.

VeganSure is now one of our most popular challenge tests; last year over 40% of our challenge testing was performed using the VeganSure solution – for brands, both small and large. In fact, as part of its commitment to deliver 100%

vegan formulas by 2023, The Body Shop was one of the first companies to start moving micro challenge tests to VeganSure solutions. Anne-Laure Fonteneau, Head of R&D Bath & Body, Haircare at The Body Shop, comments, 'Adopting VeganSure for our microbiological challenge testing was a natural decision. For us, becoming vegan was a natural step. MSL's VeganSure solution enables us to offer fully tested and regulatory-approved products, which supports our mission to becoming 100% vegan.'

Last year, we expanded VeganSure testing with the launch of VeganSure Dehydrated Culture Media (DCM). We can now supply animal-free DCM to companies around the world with in-house laboratories or microbiological testing laboratories, so they can perform routine microbiological testing themselves.

All VeganSure DCM products are validated against traditional media to ensure quality of results and meet the requirements of the UK and EU Cosmetic Regulations. Additionally, the specific DCM products suitable for all cosmetic microbiological testing are also registered with The Vegan Society's Trademark, meaning that companies who use them can claim the VeganSure stamp of approval, without having to be audited by The Vegan Society.

We have lots of future plans in the pipeline for VeganSure, and whilst it is mainly performed in the cosmetics industry, there is scope to expand into other sectors, such as food.

To find out more about VeganSure or to talk to us about your testing needs, please contact vegansure@msl.io.

