The RSPCA defines 'cruelty-free' as:

- The company manufacturing the cosmetic product must not originate, endorse or finance any form of testing on animals. This includes the testing of ingredients or finished products on animals by the company themselves or through third parties at any stage of development, production or marketing
- The cosmetic must not contain ingredients tested on animals by, or on behalf of, the
 cosmetics industry, after a specified fixed cut-off (FCO) date (note: each company
 decides on its own FCO date)
- The company policy includes a commitment to take whatever steps are morally, legally or financially possible to achieve a reduction in, and eventual end of, animal use in the cosmetics industry in general. Funding research into humane alternatives to animal testing could be one way to help achieve this
- Animal products, by-products or derivatives must not be used as ingredients for cosmetics or in the development, production or marketing of the finished products.

'Cruelty-free' and 'Not tested on animals' are not the same. The first three points above refer to the animal testing issue, whereas the last is about animal-derived ingredients. The former receives most attention from the consumer and industry with respect to labelling.

