

Shark-free COVID-19 vaccine petition makes waves, gains more online support

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An online movement to save sharks from becoming the next victims of

the COVID-19 pandemic is growing in support.

Earlier in September, a Los Angeles-based, shark-protection group, Shark Allies, made a post on Facebook and created a petition on Change.org regarding the dangers shark populations face as countries around the world race to find a COVID-19 vaccine.

Sharks are a common source for an important vaccine ingredient known as squalene, which is added to vaccines to enhance the immune response, according to U.S..gov. Squalene can be found in many different sources including plants, but is harvested from shark livers because of its cost effectiveness and bountifulness, U.S..gov reported.

As a result, Shark Allies grew concerned that the race for a vaccine may lead to unregulated countries harvesting an unsustainable amount of sharks that could endanger the species.

The World Health Organization has identified squalene as an ingredient in pre-clinical COVID-19 vaccines, but does not list where the squalene comes from.

"This could spell potential disaster for sharks and humans since this resource is neither sustainable nor reliable for the mass production of a COVID-19 vaccine," Shark Allies wrote on Change.org. "Countries producing shark squalene may soon need the oil for their own vaccine. The [supply chain](#) has never been tested at the scale that a coronavirus vaccine would demand."

Shark Allies' petition calls on [regulatory agencies](#) and manufactures to include nonanimal squalene in all tests for current and future products with squalene. The petition had surpassed its goal of 50,000 signatures, now with more than 57,000 as of Oct. 5.

"The news about sharks used in vaccines has spread like wildfire around the globe," Shark Allies wrote in a Facebook post. "Using sustainable sources and protecting [sharks](#) doesn't have to take away anything from humans. We can do both. Alternatives exist!"

Shark Allies' campaign for nonanimal squalene sources has pledged on writing and publishing a peer-reviewed paper targeting manufacturers and government agencies involved in the squalene and [vaccine](#) industries.

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