

The HERALD-MAIL

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On cloned meat, FDA not trustworthy

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To the editor:

FDA assurances on the safety of cloned, genetically engineered meat ("Anybody want to eat cloned meat?" Jan. 17) as reported by Dr. Stephen Sundlof, director of the agency's Center for Veterinary Medicine, are contrary to the conclusions of the agency's own scientific review panel. This conclusion is also contrary to reports by farmers of sickness and deformities in cloned cattle.

Sundlof's assurances are more suspect in view of his decade-old insistence of the safety of genetically engineered, recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) milk used to increase milk production. This insistence conflicts with well-documented evidence on the sharply increased level of a natural growth factor, known as IGF-1, in rBGH milk. This is of major concern in view of strong evidence, based on over 30 publications in Cancer Research, The Lancet, Science and other leading scientific journals, that increased IGF-1 levels are associated with major risks of breast, colon and prostate cancers.

Furthermore, in the absence of any statutory authority, FDA insists that organic milk be labeled with the statement that "There is no significant difference between milk from cows treated with rBGH and untreated cows," and "that no test can distinguish between" them. In fact, rBGH milk contains elevated levels of a milk fat incriminated in heart disease, an uncommon thyroid hormone, and occasionally pus and antibiotics used to treat mastitis resulting from enforced milk production.

This is not the first time that we've witnessed such highly questionable FDA bias. A January 1986 report, "Human Food Safety and the Regulation of Animal Drugs," unanimously approved by the House Committee on Government Operations, concluded that the "FDA has consistently disregarded its responsibility," and "repeatedly put what it perceives are interests of veterinarians and the livestock industry ahead of its legal obligation to protect consumers - jeopardizing the health and safety of consumers of meat, milk and poultry."

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