​The Cancer and Meat Controversy????

11-12-15
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During the week of October 26th a news release from WHO, World Health Organization, and their committee IARC, International Agency for Research on Cancer, warned everyone about their latest cancer causing food.  The IARC had classified "processed meat" as being carcinogenic to humans ( group 1 ) and red meat as a probably carcinogenic to humans ( group 2 ). The news release was carried by all major news media - television and news print all around the world.

I was busy loading my lunch tray in the cafeteria when a gentleman informed me all those selected items were "bad for my health," according to the WHO and IARC report, but I happen to like each of these food items.  Over the last several years several items have been determined to be "bad for my health" by various health organizations and reported by the news media.  These items include but are not limited to: apples, coffee, eggs, bacon, beef, grilled food, ham, sausage, wine, sunlight, air we breath, hot dogs, night shift work, aleo vera, hair coloring, alcohol and others.  Only to have several, if not all these items retracted at a later date.

The IARC places everything into five possible categories: Group 1, carcinogenic to humans, the highest risk.  We can be rather sure that these items have the potential to cause cancer.  Included in the group 1 classification are smoking, asbestos, alcohol and now processed meat. Group 2A, probably carcinogenic to humans, translated to "there is some evidence that these items could cause cancer but we can not be sure."  Group 2B, possible carcinogenic to humans, is for items whose relationship to cancer is less than certain.  The group 2b may be the most confusing as it becomes a catch-all for all risk factors that IARC has considered but could not confirm or fully discount as carcinogenic.  Group 3, not classified as carcinogenic to humans, that can not be classified due to lack of evidence.  Group 4, is for items probably not carcinogenic to humans.

Only one item evaluated by IARC has been classified probably does not cause cancer,that is a chemical found in yoga pant, from 984 items evaluated.  These categories are based on strength of evidence, "not degree of risk."  The categories are not meant to convey how dangerous something is, just how certain we are that something is dangerous, confusogenic.  The IARC did not conduct any new research but reviewed existing information that had already been evaluated by medical and scientific individuals.

Cancer is a very complex disease, to say the least, that the brightest doctors and scientist do not fully understand.  Billions of dollars have been invested on research and studies all around the world and no single food item has ever been proven to cause or  cure cancer.

The opinion of the IARC to list red meat as a possible carcinogen does not change that fact.  The available scientific evidence does not support a casual relationship between red meat or processed meat and any type of cancer.

Most scientist suggest or agree that it is unrealistic to isolate a single food item as a cause of cancer from a complex dietary pattern, further compounded by lifestyle and environmental factors.

To improve one's overall health - eat a balanced diet, maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and do not smoke.

The average person's risk of developing colorectal cancer is approximately 5%.  If the WHO and IARC data suggest an 18% increase in risk is correct, a daily 50 gram ( 1.75 ounce ) serving of processed meat increases that risk to 5.9%, which is slightly less than one person per 100, of which between 65 to 5.4 people will survive for five years or more, depending on the cancer stage at time of diagnosis.

Despite the increase in meat consumption over the last century ( and therefore assumed increase in processed meat consumption due to changes in dining habits and food availability ), the death rate from colorectal cancer has declined over the last twenty years.

Also, in the media articles discussing WHO and IARC announcements, there are no mention of "mitigating factors" such as fruits and vegetable consumption.

As with so many other health risk, its almost impossible to assess the impact  of meat consumption in isolation.  I am a meat lover and its not likely that I will stop consuming processed meat or red meat, but I may add a few more fruits and vegetables along the way.

Say,-- Guess What -- the WHO today ( 11- 3- 15 ) "backpedals" on their announcement off processed meat , red meat and cancer.  They may be "backpedaling" but the damage has been done.  It will require months and years to repair misleading information from a world wide organization.

Don't forget "Beef" supplies lots of nutrition in a small 3.5 ounce serving and is part of a healthy diet.

References:
1- WHO and IARC summary at The Lancet Oncology.
2- Dr. Betsy Boorne, North American Meat Institute.
3- Dr. Jude Capper, Montana State University.
4- Dr. Shalene McNeill, Nutritional Scientist and Registered Dietitian at National Cattlemen's Beef Association.
5- Dr. Dominik Alexander, Journal of the American College of Nutrition.
6- Dr. James Coughlin, Nutritional Toxicologist.

On our webpage "agriculture at its best" check out these articles.
1- [Heart Healthy Diet](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/heart_healthy_beef.docx)
2- [B O L D](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/bold.docx)
3-[Love That Lean Beef](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/love_that_lean_beef.docx)

Consumer Report Comments ????
​11-24-15

Several people have ask and commented, "Have you seen the October 2015 issue of Consumer Report?", well no I haven't at this time. The other day at Hair Hunters, for a hair cut, there was a copy of Consumer Report, which I borrowed to read and study the 8 page article: "Wanted: Safe Beef,"" bacteria-tainted ground beef remains a major source of serious illness in the U.S., we know how to make the system better. What's holding us back???"

There were several points that could be supported and others that I think are out of reason to this cowboy's way of thinking. But, just how can one cowboy from the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains rival a national conaumer report.

These area few points I would like to comment on or express an opinion.

Yes- all meat potentially can contain bacteria that can cause illness. Bacteria can multiply rapidly due to improper handling, temperature and infected handling utensils. Most bacteria can be destroyed by proper cooking temperatures, proper handling and cleanliness during preparation procedures. All ground beef products should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160 F, using a meat thermometer as color is not a good indication of doneness. Also, steaks and roast prepared to an internal temperature of  145 F, the outside or surface temperature should destroy any surface bacteria.

No-- their statement that cattle ( steers and heifers ) are crammed together with with only 23 sq ft per animal in feed-yards. The feed-yards that I have had the opportunity to visit in Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa-- both farmer feeders and commercial -- have space 300+ sq ft per animal. These feed-yards have sufficient space, feed bunks and water trough space for animals to move about freely and un-restricted. These feed-yards clean cattle pens often to prevent build-up of manure making the surface clean, dry and more comfortable for cattle. The pens also have mounds created for cattle to have additional space, clean and dry, for bed-down.  Thus reducing contamination on their hides ( skin and hair coats ).  Also, un-comfortable cattle do not preform up to their potential.

No-- The diet ( rations or meals ) contain forages and by-products in addition to corn and soybean meal. Including, hays and silages, forages assist the cattle's digestive system digest these ingredients more more efficiently and reduce digestive disturbances. Many feed-yards include by-products such as cottonseed, soybean hulls, distillers grains, candy and others. The cattle receive a balanced ration for top performance.  Including animal by-products in cattle rations has been "ban" by law since 2004. During my work in agriculture extension during the early 1980's, we did not recommend including poultry litter ( poop ) in cattle rations. The poultry litter in poultry raising areas that I am acquainted with, use the litter as fertilizer to grow grass for cattle feed.

Yes-- harvest rates are high at commercial harvest facilities, however trained veterinarians are on-hand at many points during the harvest procedure. These veterinarians ( inspectors ) inspect cattle from time of arrival at harvest facilities, all during the harvest procedure and continually retrieve samples for laboratory testing.  Each carcass is inspected for contamination and damages that can be trimmed. These harvest facilities provide high temperature washes to improve safety of meat produced. Inspection is provided by U.S.D.A. Food Safety and Inspection Service. I have had the opportunity to observe these inspectors in action at several harvest facilities both on the local and national level. The meat is clean and safe.

It is puzzling as to why Consumer Report gathered information and comments from grass-fed farmers and not from conventional raised cattle farmers too. Naturally if I were raising "pink armadillo's" they would be the best. From information I have read and studied, the safety and nutritional values of meats are not greatly influenced by method of raising -- Grain-fed, Grass-fed, Organic or Natural.  I think there is a place for each  diverse food producer to market their product, without down-grading another.  After all, we are all in the business of raising food for the american family.

Yes-- antibiotics are medicines that are given to people and animals to treat or prevent illness caused by bacteria. These antibiotics can either kill or inhibit the growth of harmful bacteria.  Antibiotics are given to animals and people that are sick to help relieve pain and suffering, thus helping each to feel better and recover. Just like in people antibiotics do not have any effect on diseases caused by viruses, parasites or germs besides bacteria.  Antibiotics may also be given to animals that are in danger of becoming sick in order to prevent illness. Some antibiotics, for reasons that aren't totally understood, help cattle grow faster and get more from the feed they eat. These medicines are used in lower concentrations than when they are used to treat illness. The decision to use or not use these products is a management decision for each cattle raiser. The approval and directions for the use of "ALL" antibiotics are directed by Food and Drug Administration to guarantee the proper use of these products for animal health and to maintain a safe supply of beef.

The article or report refers to "sustainability" of grass fed beef. To meet the demand for beef by american families using grass-fed would require the use of more land, water, grass, time, labor and dollars, while producing more greenhouse gasses and waste.  During the years 2005 and 2011 conventional raised beef has reduced the use of water  3%, emissions to soil 7%, use of land 10%, greenhouse gasses emissions  2%, use of energy 2%, use of natural resources 2%, all the while increasing beef raised per animal.

Farmers and ranchers take their responsibility to raise a safe product very serious, after all we are consumers too. Thats my 2 cents worth and that plus $1.10 will get you a cup of coffee at some establishments.

Thanks for your time:

Another few articles of interest may be found at our web or blog page "agriculture at its best" are:
Farmers Corner Stall:
1-[Antibiotic Resistance: Should I Be Concerned?](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/antibiotic_resistance.docx)
2[-Our Calves Life Cycle](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/our_calves_lifecycle_10-2015.docx)
3-[Beef's Life Cycle](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/beef_lifecycle_july_11_2015_thoughts___stall_147.docx)
Mikes Thoughts and Views
1-[Beef Quality assurance](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/beef_quality_assurance_0215_comments.doc)
2- [Antibiotic Use In Beef](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/antibiotic_use_in_beef_august_5_2015.docx)
Our Land
1-[Cattle and Our Environment](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/cattle_and_our_environment.docx)