



# TEXAS CATTLE FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

5501 I-40 WEST

AMARILLO, TEXAS 79106

806 / 358-3681

Volume 43, Number 34

August 21, 2009

**TIME Magazine Takes Aim At Modern Livestock Production Practices** in this week's edition of the magazine. "America's Food Crisis and How to Fix It," the cover article written by Bryan Walsh, offers the same unfounded notions about antibiotics, environmental concerns and animal welfare previously put forth by folks like Eric Schlosser (*Fast Food Nation*) and Michael Pollan (*Omnivore's Dilemma*). Beef is not alone in taking a hit in *TIME*'s diatribe – pork, poultry and dairy are also victimized.

**TCFA believes the real story is** that *TIME* produced such a poor attack piece despite the repeated efforts of NCBA to provide ample access to interviews, site visits and information that could have allowed a more honest and accurate portrayal of animal agriculture.

NCBA says it first heard from a *TIME* research assistant in late July who said the magazine was working on an article about food safety and antibiotics. So NCBA arranged an interview with NCBA Manager of Legislative Affairs Kristina Butts. Then NCBA said Walsh called this week to fact check some notes. In that conversation, NCBA was able to learn that the article was not limited to just antibiotics but would instead cover a wide range of issues including beef, nutrition and the environment.

On Wednesday afternoon, NCBA – trying to get a fair shake for the industry and meet the reporter's tight deadline – set up five interviews for Walsh with industry experts and provided him with fact sheets and research about beef choices, beef nutrition and the environment. Ultimately no quotes from those interviews were used. An article with more than 3,000 words permitted just one quote from all the experts NCBA provided Walsh: Butts' explanation that human resistance to antibiotics "is the result of human use not related to veterinary use."

NCBA and TCFA are currently working on a comprehensive response strategy to the *TIME* article.

If you want to read *TIME*'s article, it's available here:

<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1917458,00.html>. Of course, the opening salvo on our industry comes with the cover: <http://www.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,20090831,00.html>.

**Defending The Use Of Antibiotics In Livestock Production**, a coalition of 20 organizations including NCBA sent the White House a letter this week outlining the actions the industry has taken to ensure the safe use of FDA-approved products. Meanwhile, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) sent Congress a report supporting the continued use of antimicrobials in animal agriculture. These materials were sent as lawmakers debate legislation that would ban the non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in food animals; advocates of a ban believe it would protect against the development of antibiotic resistance in humans.

**The letter from the coalition of ag organizations** states that producers "strive daily to provide best possible management of their animals through superior genetics, nutrition, veterinary care, housing and handling. Optimal animal health and welfare leads to production of safe, affordable and abundant food, critical to U.S. food security. Maintaining the health of U.S. herds and flocks requires farmers and ranchers to have all approved safe and effective technologies, including animal health products, available to us.

"However, despite the unsubstantiated allegations surrounding these uses, no conclusive scientific studies have been offered demonstrating the use of antibiotics on farms contributes significantly to an increase in human resistance. In fact, a growing body of evidence shows just the opposite, namely the responsible, professional use of these products reduces pathogens in and on foods, enhancing animal welfare while not contributing to resistance."

A copy of the letter is available here:

<http://www.feedstuffs.com/Media/MediaManager/WHLetteronAntibiotics8.14.09FINAL.pdf>

**The report by AVMA** is a rebuttal of the Pew Commission's report issued last year, which attacked the use of antimicrobials by livestock producers. AVMA says the recommendations offered in the Pew Commission report "are unscientific and can actually threaten human health."

AVMA's report says the organization "shares the concerns of the human medical community, the public health community, governmental agencies, and the public regarding the potential problem of resistance developing in animals and then being transferred to humans. However, we emphasize the importance and primacy of using these medicines to prevent and treat diseases before disease-causing bacteria enter our food

supply. Passing legislation that would ban the use of these antibiotics before science-based studies and risk-based evaluations are done to determine if there is an actual risk to human health would be detrimental to animal and human health. Inappropriate reactions to the use of antibiotics could have unknown and unintended consequences that negatively affect animal health and welfare and ultimately could create other public health risks, such as increased foodborne disease."

To see the full AVMA report, go to <http://www.avma.org/advocacy/PEWresponse/>.

**No Statistical Link Between The Consumption Of Red Meat and Breast Cancer** was found in a recent medical study, *Meatingplace.com* reports. Researchers with the American Society for Nutrition analyzed three human studies of the diets of nearly 320,000 women, conducted in Europe between 1992 and 2003, according to information on the website of *The American Journal of Clinic Nutrition*, which will publish the research in its September 2009 issue.

"We have not consistently identified intakes of meat, eggs, or dairy products as risk factors for breast cancer," the authors concluded in their abstract. "Future studies should investigate the possible role of high-temperature cooking in the relation of red meat intake with breast cancer risk."

The authors of the study suggest that moderate consumption of meat and dairy helps offset the fact that many women don't get enough iron and calcium. However, the researchers said that they did not analyze the relationship between meat and dairy consumption during childhood and developing breast cancer later in life.

Earlier this year, a separate study by the National Institutes of Health and the American Association of Retired Persons also found no link between red meat consumption and breast cancer.

**Ohio Elections Officials Have Approved Ballot Language For A Proposed Constitution Amendment** that proponents hope will thwart efforts by HSUS to impose new regulations on livestock and poultry producers. If voters approve, Ohio's state constitution will be amended to create the Ohio Livestock Care Standards Board.

According to information from the Ohio Secretary of State's office, the 13-member Board would "prescribe standards for animal care and well-being that endeavor to maintain food safety, encourage locally grown and raised food, and protect Ohio farms and families." Additionally, the standards would be adopted only after the Board considered "agricultural best management practices, biosecurity, disease prevention, animal morbidity/mortality data, food safety practices, and the protection of local, affordable food supplies."

The proposed constitutional amendment was drafted by state lawmakers after HSUS threatened to hit Ohio with a campaign similar to the one that led to passage of Proposition 2 in California last year. Prop 2 presented California producers with an assortment of new restrictions on animal confinement practices. HSUS has expressed opposition to the proposed Standards Board, saying it would be dominated by industry.

Ohioans For Livestock Care, a group supporting creation of the Standards Board, says voter approval of the state constitutional amendment in November would keep control of the state's agriculture "under the guidance of Ohio experts including family farmers, food safety experts, veterinarians and consumers."

To read the ballot language, go to

[http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/upload/ballotboard/2009/2-final\\_language.pdf](http://www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/upload/ballotboard/2009/2-final_language.pdf).

**The Last Remaining Premises Quarantined For Vesicular Stomatitis (VS) In New Mexico Has Been Released.** According to the New Mexico Livestock Board (NMLB), extensive examination and epidemiological investigations have not revealed any further evidence of the disease in the state. There are no investigations for VS at this time. All in-state movement restrictions imposed due to VS have been suspended.

NMLB anticipates that other states will suspend restrictions concerning VS in a timely manner, but all persons shipping livestock out of New Mexico are advised to call the state of destination for entry requirements.

**Premium Standard Farms Pork Operations Are Laying Off 117 Workers In Dalhart,** according to the *Amarillo Globe News*. Citing information from the Texas Workforce Commission, the paper reported that the layoffs will begin Oct. 16 and could continue through the end of the year as hogs go to market. When the layoffs conclude, there will be 25 employees left on the payroll. A company spokesperson identified negative market conditions as the reason for the job cuts.

**USDA Wants To Help Pork Producers, Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack Told Reporters** at the Iowa State Fair this week. Although USDA is currently out of money to buy more surplus commodities, Vilsack said he supports increasing federal commodity purchases to help producers, *Meatingplace.com* reports.

Vilsack also said efforts are underway by the Administration and Congress to help pork producers with loan forgiveness and to reopen markets closed due to misinterpretation of the H1N1 virus.

**Hoping To Prevent Unwarranted Consumer Concerns About Food Safety**, the Tri-National Agriculture Accord approved a statement introduced by Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples and signed jointly by agricultural leaders from the United States, Mexico and Canada. The statement asks all media and citizens from North America to properly identify public health threats with names that avoid public confusion and backlash to other industries. Specifically, the joint statement references the inaccurate use of the term "swine flu" when referring to the H1N1 flu virus. This inaccurate label has caused major problems for the agriculture industry in all three nations.

"The media referring to the H1N1 virus as 'swine flu' is like a judge calling an innocent man guilty – it is wrong and must not continue," Commissioner Staples said.

Part of the statement reads: "As we prepare for the distribution upon availability of the H1N1 vaccine in advance of an expected resurgence of the virus, academics, public health officials and the media need to refrain from the mischaracterization of the disease."

According to the Centers for Disease Control, the H1N1 influenza virus is not transmitted by food. You cannot get the flu from eating pork or pork products. Eating properly handled and cooked pork is safe, and all Americans can be confident when consuming these products. The U.S. has a surveillance system in place to track animal health and protect the nation's food supply.

**Anthrax Has Been Confirmed In A Cow That Died in Crockett County**, according to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC).

Anthrax bacteria can lie dormant in soil for years, until hot, dry weather conditions trigger the bacteria. Livestock and wildlife can pick up the bacteria as they graze close to the soil. Once they ingest the bacteria, cattle, sheep, goats, horses, deer and other grazing animals can become ill and die within hours.

"We have heard concerns about anthrax in other counties this summer, but the only laboratory confirmed case is in Crockett County," said Dr. Hillman, the state veterinarian and head of TAHC.

"There is no cause for alarm, but we do urge ranchers in the area to vaccinate their grazing livestock to prevent losses to this naturally occurring disease. The injectable vaccine can be obtained from feed stores or through veterinarians or livestock supply representatives. Unfortunately, there is no approved medication or prevention for free-ranging wildlife. When cooler temperatures roll in, the outbreak will end."

During anthrax outbreaks, ranchers should wear long sleeves and gloves when handling or vaccinating livestock, said Hillman. After ranchers are in contact with livestock, Hillman advised following good sanitation measures including hand washing and laundering of clothing. Dr. Hillman also cautioned against picking up bones, horns or shed antlers, and said pets and children should be kept away from dead animals. Healthy animals also should be moved from a contaminated pasture during an outbreak.

All anthrax cases – suspected or laboratory confirmed – must be reported to TAHC, which operates a 24-hour hotline at 1-800-550-8242. TAHC regulations also require that animals on infected premises be quarantined for at least 10 days after all livestock have been vaccinated against the disease.

For more information, go to

[http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/news/pr/2009/2009Aug\\_AnthraxDetectedInCrockettCounty.pdf](http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/news/pr/2009/2009Aug_AnthraxDetectedInCrockettCounty.pdf).

**FDA Has Received A Petition To Ban The Use Of Poultry Litter As Cattle Feed** from an animal rights organization known as Food Animals Concerns Trust (FACT). According to *The Poultry Site*, FACT claims using poultry litter as feed represents a health threat for both cattle and beef consumers. On several occasions, FDA has reviewed the use of poultry litter as feed. Most recently, in a final rule issued by FDA in April 2008 addressing "Substances Prohibited From Use in Animal Food or Feed," FDA stated, "it is not necessary to prohibit poultry litter from being fed to cattle."

**The Myth That The World Could Feed More People If It Gave Up Eating Meat** has received a strong rebuttal from Dennis Avery of the Hudson Institute, a Washington D.C.-based policy research organization. Avery's piece is a response to a recent column in the *Washington Post* that suggested it would be more energy-efficient to grow grain to feed people instead of growing grain to feed livestock. In dispelling that flawed logic, Avery pointed out that grass is cattle's biggest feed source, and although humans cannot digest it, grass happens to grow in a lot of places where grain cannot be raised. In other words, you cannot automatically replace what cattle eat with crops suitable for human consumption. To read more of Avery's article, which offers several good examples of the benefits of modern livestock production, go to

[http://www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication\\_details&id=6403&pubType=HI\\_opeds](http://www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication_details&id=6403&pubType=HI_opeds).

**Nominations For The NCBA Annual Environmental Stewardship Awards Are Now Open for 2010.** The award, now in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, recognizes producers at the regional and national level who demonstrate

outstanding stewardship practices and wildlife habitat improvement, while maintaining profitable cattle operations. Any organization, group, or individual may nominate a U.S. cattle producer. The nomination deadline is Feb. 24, 2010. From the field of nominees, seven regional winners are selected by an expert panel representing the NCBA, conservation and sportsmen's groups, federal and state agencies and land grant universities.

Judges consider the management of water, wildlife, vegetation, air and soil, as well as the nominees' leadership and the sustainability of the business as a whole. Regional winners will be announced in July 2010. From the seven regional winners, judges will choose a national winner to be announced at the Cattle Industry Annual Convention in January 2011.

The program is funded by Dow AgroSciences and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information, including examples of past winners, visit: [www.EnvironmentalStewardship.org](http://www.EnvironmentalStewardship.org) or contact the National Cattlemen's Foundation at (303) 694-0305.

**The Beef Checkoff Is Making Sure Mobile Phone Technology** helps promote beef. Phones are not just for talking these days as more people commonly use them to find information they normally would get on a computer. When it's meal-planning time, consumers can now use their mobile phones to get information about beef – including recipes, nutritional data and shopping tips – from a Checkoff-funded service. The steps to follow are:

1. Enter "beef for dinner" into your mobile web browser (it's available for all carriers).
2. Search by a specific beef cut or recipe title.
3. Log in to the Beef. It's What's For Dinner online community for direct access to your shopping lists at the store or prepare your favorite beef recipe with ease from your kitchen.

If you'd like to see the information available through this service, go to <http://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/>.

**Argentina, The Biggest Beef-Consuming Nation, May Resort To Imports** for the first time within two years as a drought kills cattle and export controls prompt ranchers to quit the business, according to *Bloomberg*. For more information, go to [http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aTXx\\_bkeJgXo](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aTXx_bkeJgXo).

**Texas AgriLife Extension Service's Big Country Beef Conference Is Aug. 27 In Abilene.** The agenda for this year's event includes discussion of age and source verification technology, the current status of NAIS and maintaining herd performance during droughts. For more information, go to <http://taylor-tx.tamu.edu/pubcat.cfm?COUNTY=Taylor&CatID=3378>.

**Pesticide Collection:** TCEQ organizes free, regional collections of unwanted or unused pesticides throughout the state as part of the Agricultural Waste Pesticide Collection program. A number of collections are scheduled in the coming months. For a schedule of collections, go to <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/assistance/AgWaste/schedule.html>.

Amarillo is the place to be October 28-30 for the TCFA Annual Convention. The Convention will take place at the Ambassador Hotel and the Amarillo Civic Center. Make sure the TCFA Annual Convention is marked on your calendar and plan to be in Amarillo October 28-30!

Please note: All links are still available at [www.tcfa.org](http://www.tcfa.org) under Newsletter links.