



.....STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

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It is officially “Spring” as I write this edition, and it actually feels like it. What a beautiful day to kick off another season of the year. Of course, it is Nebraska and things can change quickly. One thing we do need very quickly is some moisture and I don’t think anyone would complain what form that came in right now. We are dry and it looks to get dryer. We have already ran past at least one “fog day” with little to show for it. One thing is for sure, there is getting to be a bigger and bigger chance of a return to 2012 concerns. Keep your fingers crossed, send up your prayers, do the rain dance! We need it!

Of course we don’t have a lot of say in whether or not we get that moisture but we can have something to say about some of the things that constantly bombard the agriculture industry. It just seems to keep coming. I get asked all the time if there isn’t something positive out there – and there is. I do try to point those things out too, but I quite honestly can hardly keep up with the news concerning the disconcerting, myth-laden, agenda driven bashing of the industry I love so much.

I am going to center this week’s talk on the latest of several things that have really caught my eye. But first I suggest thinking back to your youth and start singing “Old McDonald Had a Farm.” I have always seen a bit of innocence in that song and a hint of nostalgia, but to others it is an avenue to bring vitriol to our family farmers who try to make a living and feed an ever-hungry world. I have no beef (no pun intended) with people who raise organic food. We need choices in this world and there is room for all of us in the production of food, but it angers and saddens me when one of our own try to discredit the conventional farmer with myths, lies and mindless theatrics that deepen the chasm between farmer and consumer and within our own ranks and this latest thing isn’t Chipotle’s or HSUS but just as negative.

“Only Organic”, a coalition of organic food brands including Organic Valley, Stonyfield, and Annie’s Homegrown, recently launched the “New MacDonald” movement, a campaign encouraging consumers to take a pledge to add one additional organic product to their grocery cart each week. That in itself is OK, but here is where I draw the line. The campaign’s big kickoff was this dark video, in they use schoolchildren to give a rousing rendition of Old MacDonald’s Farm, except in this version the song has refrains such as: “with a hormone here and a hormone there”, “a small cage here and a tight cage there”, “here a spray [of pesticides], there a spray, everywhere a spray spray”. You can find the website and the video at: <http://newmacdonald.onlyorganic.org/>. This follows an earlier cartoon type video that also shows a disdain for what we do and how we produce our product without much credence, education or in my mind morals. That particular one can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PY4tGmdtU8. That was bad enough, the New McDonald is worse!!

In agriculture, sometimes we can be a house divided, especially when it comes to marketing our products. When the only competitive differentiation in a commodity is how it was produced, it’s nearly impossible to herald its benefits without disparaging your neighbor’s different production methods, and I believe the end goal of their ill-willed campaign is to drive demand for their products and at the expense of those that are conventionally grown, without regard to their neighbors or honesty that they should be bringing to the total ag industry. It makes an already thin trust, perpetuated by people like Food Babe, Dr. OZ and other charlatans, into an even lesser defined divide. People have a tendency to believe what they see on the internet and are too lazy to research, and of amazement to me is that they don’t listen to science! These types of things seem like hate to me. Farmers may not always agree on all aspects of agriculture, but at least I hope that we all can agree on one thing: hate should not prevail. Americans should be free to eat safe, quality food regardless of whether they eat organic, natural, or not. What real good comes from this sort of bologna? And I don’t mean the processed meat type!!

Speaking of another type of McDonalds, I am sure most of you are aware that McDonald’s restaurants is recognized as a founding member of the newly formed U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef. While that is a rather tough topic to put your head around, they have not wasted time in dealing with another hot topic – antibiotics. This time with poultry--but you know what is around the corner. They not only announced last week that it will buy only chickens raised without antibiotics that are important to human medicine, but also that they will serve milk from cows not treated with recombinant bovine somatotropin (rbST) which is a hormone, to evolve its menu to better meet the changing preferences of today’s customers. McDonalds introduced a new policy - "Global Vision for Antimicrobial Stewardship in Food Animals" - and added it to the list of new menu sourcing initiatives. You know that a lot of this is being created by the food activists like Food Babe and Animal Rights groups, not with the intent of marketing animal products, but an agenda of no animals at all.

Oh, maybe we should close today’s edition by also admitting that March 20 is also a very important day for those kind of people. I will have to admit, that I almost missed this utterly pointless and annoying red-letter day on the vegan calendar. Today (March 20) has been proclaimed “World Meat-out Day” by Vegan groups. It is no surprise that this whole thing is orchestrated by the Farm Animal Rights Movement (FARM) <http://www.farmusa.org/>. Here is their Mission Statement. “FARM is a 501(c)(3) national non-profit organization working to end the use of animals for food through public education and grassroots activism. We believe in the inherent self-worth of animals, as well as environmental protection and enhanced public health.” What you are seeing here is the continuation of an ideological agenda which is not favorable to Old McDonald as we have known him! I will not wish you a “Meat-Out Day” but will say instead -- Welcome to Spring!!

The preceding information comes from the research and personal observations of the writer which may or may not reflect the views of UNL or UNL Extension. For more further information on these or other topics contact D. A. Lienemann, UNL Extension Educator for Webster County in Red Cloud, (402) 746-3417 or email to: dlienemann2@unl.edu or go to the website at: <http://www.webster.unl.edu/home>