



.....STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

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The decision by Subway just one week ago was frustrating for those of us who raise livestock for meat and know what we really do to raise healthy food. It goes to show you that the “fear mongering” type of marketing is more and more present in our retail food chains and this is evident with Subway’s decision. If they would have just done some research or include animal scientists or farmers and ranchers they could have saved some face and angst. What makes me feel good about this whole issue is that enough people in agriculture took action and reached out to Subway about their policy that Subway came back with a revised statement that backs off considerable on their original statement.

The new statement is supposed to be: “That said, we recognize that antibiotics are critical tools for keeping animals healthy and that they should be used responsibly to preserve their effectiveness in veterinary and human medicine. Our policy is that antibiotics can be used to treat, control and prevent disease, but not for growth promotion of farm animals.” Accordingly, they are asking their suppliers to follow BQA and FDA guidelines, which they specify. Perhaps our collective voices were heard. I will keep an eye on if this is done, but still no Subway sandwiches for me until they do!

Bacon is a Carcinogenic: Does it seem like the United Nations has an agenda against livestock? Well, it does to me. First it was Livestock’s Long Shadow, the report that made outrageous claims about livestock GHG emissions. This week the World Health Organization (the United Nations’ public health arm) issued a report from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) claiming: “Processed meats, including sausages and bacon as carcinogenic to humans. Red meat, including beef, pork, and lamb, are probably carcinogenic to humans.” This report came out of a collaboration between the World Cancer Research Fund, the WHO, and the American Institute of Cancer Research.

You must remember that the IARC are the same group that has gone after GMO’s, 2,4-D, diesel fumes, and more recently glyphosate. A third of that group, the World Cancer Research Fund, is at best suspect to me in that they first published a debunked report “The Cancer Project” which was funded and operated by Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), a vegan, animal rights group whose views are closely aligned with PETA. It should also be noted that IARC’s Dr. Christopher Portier is not only associated with both the IARC and the World Cancer Fund, but was/is also involved in the Environmental Defense Fund. Conflict of interest perhaps? To me, this once again illustrates how international scientific bodies continue to put politics over science, run anti-industry witch-hunts and have become the playground for environmental activist predators using the cloak of an international body to try to give their campaigns a resemblance of credibility. While we can argue whether the meat-cancer link is settled or junk science, the impact on the livestock futures markets was significant when it was announced! It has and will hurt the livestock industry.

Things like this unfortunately are picked up by those that are trying to stop animal agriculture and have an agenda that is not favorable to us as meat producers. Even news centers like television, radio and papers follow the same path. They of course use headlines that are scary and fully use this as a fear mongering tool to go after their favorite target or to sell their program. It is too bad that they don’t do the study and divulge the whole deal. The WHO’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) weighs the strength of the scientific evidence that some food, drink, pesticide, “smokeable” plants, whatever is a carcinogen. What it does not do is consider how much that substance actually increases your risk for actually getting cancer—even if it differs by magnitudes of 100. The designation puts processed meat in the same category of hazard as tobacco. While that sounds like music to the ears of those that continually animal agriculture, that doesn’t mean eating bacon and hot dogs is as dangerous as smoking, as some headlines suggest, and in fact not even close. It really only means that, in the judgment of WHO, there’s sufficient evidence to link meat to increased rates of cancer - not proof!

The American Cancer Society warns that IARC’s list of carcinogens needs to be considered in the appropriate context, saying: “The lists themselves say nothing about how likely it is that an agent will cause cancer. Carcinogens do not cause cancer at all times, under all circumstances.” You must take into consideration so many factors that it is impossible to come to a direct conclusion. It should be pointed out that IARC does ‘hazard identification’, not ‘risk assessment’. That sounds quite technical, but what it means is that IARC isn’t in the business of telling us of what the potential something is in causing cancer, only whether it does so or not”. That is like pointing to a banana peel and saying “there’s potential danger, but they can’t really tell you if stepping on it or slipping will actually cause your death or even how injured you will be. That means that this report should be taken in the context that it is formed.

Ag leaders were quick to condemn the IARC report as “not supported by science.” Specifically, the meat industries criticized the report in that the IARC was unable to reach a consensus agreement from a group of 22 experts in the field of cancer research. As a result, the IARC settled for a “majority” agreement. One of the individuals who sat in on the decision making process stated that many of the panelists were aiming for a specific result despite old, weak, inconsistent, self-reported intake data. They tortured the data to ensure a specific outcome.” The report was strongly criticized by the North American Meat Institute (NAMI), which said the “IARC’s vote to classify red meat and processed red meats as cancer “hazards” defies both common sense and numerous studies showing no correlation between meat and cancer.”

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>