

USA TODAY Opinion page, October 23, 2006

Opposing view: Public is against cloned food

But FDA is threatening to impose this questionable 'benefit' on U.S.

By Carol Tucker Foreman

The Food and Drug Administration is, again, threatening to impose milk and meat from cloned animals on a public that opposes the technology and its products.

Respected polls report that more than 60% of Americans think animal cloning is immoral, and that most people said they wouldn't knowingly eat the products even if the FDA approved them. But because the FDA would allow cloned meat and milk to be sold without identifying labels, consumers wouldn't be able to avoid them.

The FDA has consistently tilted toward those who want cloned milk and meat in our food. Agency officials have repeatedly asserted that science shows cloned milk and meat are safe for humans. But the FDA has never published the complete scientific studies it says support that claim.

The argument that cloning is safe for animals is unconvincing. The FDA acknowledges that clone pregnancies result in more miscarriages, deformities and premature deaths than do other technologies. But the agency dismisses this fact, saying the problems aren't unique.

Cloned meat and milk offer no public economic benefits. Having cloned cows produce more milk wouldn't reduce milk prices. U.S. farmers produce more milk than we drink, and the government is required to buy the surplus. Since 2000, dairy support programs have cost taxpayers more than \$5 billion.

Most important, this first decision to advance animal biotechnology raises ethical issues beyond the FDA's expertise. Techniques used to clone animals will advance the ability to clone humans — and create animals with human genes. Neither the agency nor animal scientists are qualified to tell us whether and when it is ethically acceptable for humans to alter the essential nature of animals. We need a national discussion, including ethicists and religious leaders, to consider the wisdom of creating cloned and transgenic animals. Given the risk of unintended consequences, we should proceed cautiously. The president should halt further FDA action on cloning and set in motion a process for beginning this broader discussion.

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