

To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A., and Audeen Wagner



GROWTH HORMONES: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

In the April 10 issue of *The Independent*, we wrote about the controversy surrounding the use of growth hormones in dairy cattle, and we got some interesting feedback from a Vernonian who wanted to "set the record straight."

Jim Krahn is the Executive Director of the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, and has many years of experience and considerable expertise in the dairy industry.

The first thing he told us is that "there is not a single dairy in the Northwest that uses the synthetic growth hormone rBGH in their dairy cows and this has been true for about five years." That will be welcome news to those consumers who have reservations

about the safety of milk products they use.

However, the reasons for discontinuing its use, he says, has nothing to do with the things we reported on – danger of contamination, increased illnesses in cows, potential nutrition and health issues for consumers. Jim says that there has been no proof presented for any side-effects from the use of growth hormones. "All it does," he states, "is make the cows eat more, which increases milk production." Dairy advocates say that no research has confirmed higher cancer rates or any other health issues for humans. Admittedly, mastitis has been found to occur at higher rates in dairy cows (attributable to greater milk production), but "appropriate management of a herd can minimize these problems," according to an article in *Rural Cooperatives*.

So, why was there a ban imposed on the use of hormones, if indeed there were no proven bad effects? "The controversy about growth hormones is not a scientific issue, but an emotional one," Jim says. Further, he says that companies who buy products from dairy farmers were under tremendous pressure from advocacy groups whose focus is on animal rights; such groups as Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) were very persistent and vocal, and were successful in shutting down the use of the hormones in Oregon and Washington. Tillamook Creamery is a case in point, reporting that they received so many complaints from the public that they decided to ban the use of the synthetic bovine growth hormone by its producer-members, about 147 dairy farmers ("Dairy Dilemma – Ban on rBGH Use by Tillamook Sparks Conflict" (*Rural Cooperatives*, Nov/Dec 2006.)

Jim's view is that the discontinuance of growth hormones in the Northwest was not only unnecessary, but was a mistake. The use of growth hormones is a significant factor in the need to "feed the world," he adds, and population growth and hunger are global concerns. The use of growth hormones has helped dairy farmers increase their profit; it is logical that those farmers would then be able to expand their herds and increase production dramatically – 40-50 percent according to some reports.

As Paul Harvey would say, "Now you know the rest of the story!" Well, not all of it, of course, it is a huge issue and the debate will no doubt continue. As is true in many cases where views are sharply divided, there are few black and white answers. There are definitely two sides to this ongoing controversy.

Krahn invites our readers to contact him with comments or questions about the rBGH issue. His phone is 503-780-9956, email jimk@odfa.org. As always, you can contact us at *The Independent*, at health@the-independent.net.

Rx for kids: one hour a day outside

by Chris Thomas, Oregon News Service

Chasing butterflies, playing cowboys and Indians, and just wandering around outside for at least an hour a day. That's the prescription from the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) this summer for Oregon children who may be experiencing "nature deficit disorder" because they spend so little time outdoors, compared to children of a generation ago.

Kevin Coyle, NWF vice president for education and training, says the digital age is one reason kids spend more time inside, with some studies showing children spend six hours a day in front of the TV or a video screen.

"By not getting outside, they're not engaging in relaxation, engaging with other kids, just getting some exercise. We're really seeing that American childhood has moved indoors."

Coyle says another reason children spend more time indoors is because parents are concerned about safety. He suggests scheduling outings to

playgrounds and group outdoor play dates to help alleviate fears about child abductions, and he points out that stranger abductions are rare – although when they do happen, they make top news stories which can distort the real risk.

The Oregon legislature is considering a bill to restore physical education programs in schools that have cut those opportunities because of money issues, and Congress is looking at a bill called the "No Child Left Inside Act" that would fund environmental education outdoor programs.

Coyle says there are other ways to help expand outdoor time for kids, too.

"Increasing the amount of focus in day care centers on outdoor time for children, returning recess to schools; there's two good ways."

He says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has made a link between less outdoor time and increased childhood obesity rates.

More information on outdoor activities can be found at www.nwf.org.

Don't let change keep you down

by the American Counseling Association

The country seemed to respond positively to the call for "change" that we heard from both major parties in the recent presidential campaign. But when change comes to our personal lives, most of us find it a cause for stress and anxiety.

That's not surprising. Even when we're not totally happy with the status quo, it may seem safe and comfortable compared to the unknowns that transitions bring.

Learning to handle change is important. Change can happen to any of us at any time. It might be the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or job or financial changes brought on by today's economy.

A first step in handling change is accepting that, while it may bring stress and anxiety, it doesn't always bring negative results. Expand your horizons. The end of a relationship may actually be an opportunity for

someone new and more exciting to enter your life. The loss of a job may be the chance to head in a new, more rewarding career direction. Seeing change as a possible opportunity rather than a major loss will have you heading in a positive direction.

And you don't need to do it all alone. An important transition can leave you feeling overwhelmed, confused or depressed. That's when friends or family members willing to listen in a safe, non-judgmental way can help. They may not have ready answers, but just talking things through can give you a new perspective and let you see situations differently.

It's also vital to take care of yourself when facing change. Eating healthy, exercising regularly and maintaining a normal schedule can all help reduce the stress of change. Don't look to drugs or alcohol as places to hide from reality.

Any major change requires time to think and adjust. While

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