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Here's the Ugly Truth About Fake Meat

by Alan Newport (BeefProducer.com, January 2019)

FAKE MEAT. It's not fake meat at all, nor any of the other names attached to it.

There miraculous "lab-grown meat products" that will someday conquer the meats markets and save all the abused livestock actually are grown from the blood of cattle fetuses.

That's right. Look it up. The base cell-culturing media for all fake meat appears to be fetal bovine serum (FBS), harvested from bovine fetal blood, which is collected from unborn fetuses in cows being killed in slaughter plants.

Ain't it rich?

In fact, FBS is a major component of many products in the biotechnology, pharmaceutical and diagnostics industries. Further, this is a market with skyrocketing demand, according to a major peddler of FBS. The demand for "murdered" and "suffering" dead fetuses from cows tormented with the same fate is actually growing.

In all my research on the topic, every single fake-meat peddler who admits anything about the rather secretive process says FBS is the base culturing medium.

Here's a good description from Slate magazine: "The use of the serum is extensive, with FBS being cited in more than 10,000 research papers, far more than other cow blood products. FBS has been used in the development of vaccines for many types of cancer, influenza, HIV, and hepatitis, as well as to help understand the development of brain and muscle tissues. Still, there is a movement to reduce its role in vaccine development, partly for ethical reasons, but also because it's a public health concern. Vaccines created with FBS can transmit mad cow disease, and although transmission is extremely unlikely, your chances being about 1 in 40 billion, the Food and Drug Administration has strongly discouraged its use for the past 25 years."

Of course, they're going to move away from cow fetus blood at some point, they say. There are other potential options, they say. They will use vegetable matter as the base someday, they say.

I can bullstuff on all that. Even if those things were possible, more huge problems abound. As Charlie Kraus, a really sharp beef producer and farmer from near Hays, Kan., wrote to me in a series of emails we traded, "Lab-grown meat cannot be produced except by literally bathing it in hormones and antibiotics. Muscle tissue in a petri dish has no immune system to protect it from infection. Muscle tissue in a petri dish has no pituitary gland to produce hormones to make it grow."

He's right. Neither Kraus nor I could find much on the process, likely because it is essentially an industrial secret, but the purveyors of fake meat that tip their hats even slightly admit they have struggles with cleanliness, and they must use antibiotics. Nor could we find reference to the hormones they surely must use to make the culture grow, but how else could it be done?

To put the icing on this bloody mess of a cake, I have one more major point of contention. We all know you are what you eat. So are animals. I wrote about this in June in a piece titled "Good soils build better beef, better food." Therefore, it is worse than laughable that fake-meat pushers are planning to sell this pathetic product to a generation (millennials) that values food origins, safety and quality above all else. I included multiple references in this blog online if you wish to follow and read them.

We in the beef industry need to explain these facts often. We also need to brag about our use of green pasture and fresh air, and existing pond and stream water, and we need to have our houses in order for stockmanship and soil health.

Fake meat is an abomination. If ever there was a "frankenfood," this is it.

Returnable cans & bottles

First Congregational Church youth group activity fund could use your deposit cans and bottles. You can drop them off at the church (3212 Pontaluna Rd.) if you would like or you can call 231-288-9873, and someone will pick them up.