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### FDA Is Set To Approve Milk, Meat From Clones

By Rick Weiss Washington Post Staff Writer Tuesday, October 17, 2006; Page A01

Three years after the Food and Drug Administration first hinted that it might permit the sale of milk and meat from cloned animals, prompting public reactions that ranged from curiosity to disgust, the agency is poised to endorse marketing of the mass-produced animals for public consumption.

The decision, expected by the end of this year, is based largely on new data indicating that milk and meat from cloned livestock and their offspring pose no unique risks to consumers.

"Our evaluation is that the food from cloned animals is as safe as the food we eat every day," said Stephen F. Sundlof, the FDA's chief of veterinary medicine, who has overseen the long-stalled risk assessment.

Farmers and companies that have been growing cloned barnyard animals from single cells in anticipation of a lucrative market say cloning will bring consumers a level of consistency and quality

conventional breeding, making perfectly marbled beef and reliably lean and tasty pork the norm on grocery shelves.

But groups opposed to the new technology, including a coalition of powerful food companies concerned that the public will reject Dolly-the-Lamb chops and clonal cream in their coffee, have not given up.

On Thursday, advocacy groups filed a petition asking the FDA to regulate cloned farm animals one type at a time, much as it regulates new drugs, a change that would drastically slow marketing approval. Some are also questioning the ethics of a technology that, while more efficient than it used to be, still poses risks for pregnant animals

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Results of Clone Studies Two new studies and a number of earlier ones have compared the meat and milk from clones and conventional livestock. A summary of the earlier findings:

- A 2002 Japanese study found "no biologically significant differences" in blood counts and blood chemistry, chemical composition of milk or meat, digestibility of meat fed to rats, allergenicity, or health or behavior of rats raised on clonal
- A 2004 study of rats raised on milk and meat from cloned animals showed no differences in growth rates, food consumption, behavior and reflexes, or breeding. Measures of their blood and urine were the same as for rats fed conventional chow, and their tissues were normal at autopsy.
- Another 2004 study found milk from cloned and conventional cows to be biochemically identical.
- A 2005 study also found the two types of milk to be virtually identical; all but 12 of more than 100 meat measures were also the same. Eight of the measures that were higher in the clones were for desirable fats and fatty acids that had been selected for in those clones. The other four were all within normal range.

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"The government talks about being science-based, and that's great, but I think there is another pillar here: the question of whether we really want to do this," said Carol Tucker Foreman, director of food policy at the Consumer Federation of America.

That there is a debate at all about integrating clones into the food supply is evidence of the remarkable progress made since the 1996 birth of Dolly, the world's first mammalian clone, created from an udder cell of an anonymous ewe.

Scientists have now applied the technique successfully to cattle, horses, pigs, goats and other mammals. Each clone is a genetic replica of the animal that donated the cell from which it was grown.

Cloning could solve a number of long-standing farm problems. Many prize males are not recognized as such until long after they have been tamed by castration. With cloning, that lack of semen would not matter. Cloning also allows farmers to make many copies of exceptional milk producers; with natural breeding, cows have only one offspring per year, and half are males.

In the eyes of many in agriculture, cloning is simply the latest in a string of advances such as artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization that have given farmers better control over animal reproduction.

"Clones are just clones. They are not genetically engineered animals," said Barbara Glenn, chief of animal biotechnology at the Biotechnology Industry Organization.

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