

rBGH-FREE OREGON CAMPAIGN FACT SHEET

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (PSR), OREGON CHAPTER

Definition: Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH or rBST) is a genetically engineered drug produced by the Monsanto Corporation. It is injected into dairy cows and induces them to increase milk production by 5-15%. It's estimated that 20-25% of the cows in Oregon are given this drug.

Background: The FDA approved rBGH in November 1993 amidst widespread criticism from government leaders and scientists (including many inside the FDA) who questioned the objectivity of the approval process. In reviewing the scientific evidence, both Canadian and European scientists concluded that significant questions and problems remain regarding human health and animal welfare.

Based on this evidence, all 25 nations of the European Union have banned rBGH, as have Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. In fact, most industrialized nations of the world have disallowed its use. The U.N. food safety organization, Codex Alimentarius, has declined three times to declare the drug safe.

In the U.S., so many consumers in Maine have refused to buy dairy products from rBGH-treated cows that there is virtually no milk sold there from cows that have received it. In northern California, most dairy farmers and dairies have also stopped using the drug in response to consumer demand.

The problems with rBGH:

- Increased cancer risk: When rBGH is injected into a cow, it elevates levels of another powerful growth hormone, IGF-1, which in excessive amounts has been linked in hundreds of studies to an increase in breast, prostate, colon, lung and other cancers in humans. Numerous scientific studies suggest IGF-1 in milk survives digestion and enters the bloodstream in sufficient quantities to potentially trigger increased cancer rates.
- Antibiotic resistance: Cows given rBGH may experience higher rates of mastitis, a painful udder infection. Mastitis is commonly treated with antibiotics such as penicillin, amoxicillin and erythromycin, which are also used to treat infections in humans. Bacteria resistant to these antibiotics can pass into humans through dairy products. This can result in increased antibiotic resistance in humans, a major health problem that is worsening each year.
- Harm to cows: In addition to mastitis, rBGH has been demonstrated to increase the incidence of 16 different harmful effects in cows, including birth disorders, increased pus in milk, hoof problems, heat stress, diarrhea, and other gynecological and gastrointestinal disturbances.

Labeling: The FDA ruled that dairy products from cows treated with rBGH are not required to be labeled. Consequently, most people that consume these products don't realize it. However, some dairies label their products rBGH-, rBST- or artificial hormone-free. Also, certified organic dairy products, by definition, don't come from cows treated with rBGH.

What you can do: Avoid unnecessary risks to your health by checking the labels and buying only dairy products free from rBGH-treated cows. Contact supermarkets and schools to support the use and sale of rBGH-free products. You can also sign up for our e-mail update list to learn more and stay current on the campaign.

PSR's Goal: Discontinue the production of any dairy products within Oregon from cows treated with rBGH. This will be done through a wide-ranging grass roots consumer education and action campaign.

To find out how you can help, or for more information: Contact Rick North, Project Director, at 503-968-1520 or hrnorth@hevanet.com. This is also available under "Programs" at our website www.oregonpsr.org.

(SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR DOCUMENTATION)

DOCUMENTATION

rBGH increases mastitis rates in cows:

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