



Dec. 22, 2009

For Immediate Release

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Groups Applaud American Public Health Association for Opposition to Hormone Use in Beef and Dairy Production

Washington, D.C.—Public health and consumer groups today applauded the decision of the American Public Health Association (APHA) to oppose the use of growth hormones in beef and dairy production by calling for a ban on the use of recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) in dairy cows and a slate of growth hormones in beef cattle.

APHA is the oldest and largest association of public health professionals in the world, representing 50,000 professionals nationwide. APHA's resolution follows an official position statement released last year by the American Nurses Association opposing rBGH. The past president of the American Medical Association (AMA) last year asked all AMA members to serve only rBGH-free milk in hospitals.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has estimated that over 42 percent of large dairy operations in the United States inject their cows with rBGH, a synthetic hormone that induces cows to produce more milk. Six steroid hormones are in widespread use in U.S. and Canadian beef cattle to speed weight gain.

“Americans are now awash in environmental hormones, while the science reveals that hormone-related diseases are on the rise,” said David Wallinga, M.D., physician/director of Food and Health at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. “The most prudent step – and the one called for by APHA – is to reduce the needless and risky addition of hormones to the food chain wherever possible.”

APHA's resolution asks the Food and Drug Administration to ban the use of rBGH and growth-promoting beef hormones, and recommends that hospitals, schools and other institutions – especially those serving children – serve food produced without these hormones. The resolution also supports product labeling for consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.

"For too long, regulators have looked the other way while industrial beef and dairy operations use hormones recklessly," said Food & Water Watch Executive Director Wenonah Hauter. "APHA's resolution against this practice sends a clear signal that public health, not industry convenience, should guide U.S. food policy."

The use of rBGH has well-known negative impacts on the health of dairy cows. Human consumption of dairy products produced using the hormone also may increase the risk of certain types of cancer. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and all 27 members of the European Union have disallowed the use of rBGH. Codex Alimentarius, the United Nations' main food safety body, twice determined that there was no consensus on the safety of rBGH for human health.

It is widely acknowledged that the use of hormones in beef production leaves hormone residues in meat, putting consumers at risk for prolonged exposure. While European Union authorities have never approved the use of hormones in beef production, the U.S. government has relied on very limited and now out-of-date research to back its claim that it is safe for producers to use growth hormones on their animals.

"In the marketplace, consumers are demanding meat and dairy produced without these hormones," said Martin Donohoe, MD of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. "But access to safe food should not depend on the whims of the market. It is the government's responsibility to ensure that all consumers are protected."

The APHA resolution can be viewed at:

<http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=1379>

Food & Water Watch is a non-profit organization working with grassroots organizations around the world to create an economically and environmentally viable future. We advocate policies that guarantee safe, wholesome food produced in a humane and sustainable manner and public, rather than private, control of water resources. For more information, visit www.foodandwaterwatch.org

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