

# Hamburger cancer study protested

CHICAGO — Both the American Farm Bureau and the National Livestock and Meat Board have leveled criticism at a study which claims hamburgers prepared at certain temperatures may cause cancer. In separate statements issued here last week, both organizations charged that the study drew its conclusions from unsubstantiated and incomplete data.

Dr. Barry Commoner, director of the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems,

Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., released the controversial study to the press last week.

American Farm Bureau's president Allan Grant accuses Commoner of taking a "cheap shot" at the beef industry with his "hamburger cancer scare news release," and claims it was designed to raise research money.

Grant said the news release was premature and unwarranted, based on the flimsy preliminary findings by St. Louis scientists.

"There does not appear to be evidence that consumption of hamburger — regardless of the method it is cooked — has caused an increase in cancer in humans," Grant said in a letter to Dr. Commoner requesting documentation of the research that led to the news release. "In fact, statistics on hamburger consumption and the incidence of stomach cancer in humans support just the opposite point of view."

The paper on which the news release was based was presented by Dr. Commoner

at the annual meeting of the American Society of Microbiologists in Las Vegas. Commoner is a well-known consumer advocate.

Grant said the hamburger cancer scare tactic obviously was a ploy to attract additional research funding for Dr. Commoner's group, a fact readily acknowledged in a Las Vegas news conference by one of Dr. Commoner's associates, Dr. Piero Dolara.

The AFBF president called the whole episode irresponsible and the sort of thing that could do "irreparable harm to the beef industry."

Despite widespread publicity giving this impression, Commoner's research does not establish a hamburger-cancer link, according to David H. Stroud, president of the National Livestock and Meat Board.

Stroud observed that incidence of cancer of all types — except lung cancer — have either been decreasing or showing little change over the past 25 years, according to 1978 data from the

American Cancer Society. During this same period there has been a dramatic increase in beef and hamburger consumption.

The study showed that, in certain instances, frying hamburgers to well-done temperatures could produce substances shown to cause "mutagens" or genetic changes in bacteria. Stroud noted that the research paper itself acknowledged that these mutagens have yet to be examined or further tested to determine if they may be potential cancer-causing agents.

After analyzing the full research paper with other industry experts, Stroud stated that data linking hamburger frying to cancer were: "...presumptive, conjectural and, at the moment, merely part of an interesting hypothesis."

"The study itself was apparently limited to testing hamburger frying using only certain types of electrical appliances," said Stroud.

In a letter to Dr. Commoner, Stroud said, "Our people and probably others in the industry should visit

with you as soon as possible in regard to these interpretations which we find unpersuasive."

The Meat Board also was critical of the manner in which the study was released prior to the presentation of the paper at the American Society for

Microbiology convention in Las Vegas this week. Stroud said the study was "Announced and distributed with news releases and hoopla as though it were a breakthrough, and smacks more of a promotion campaign than a scientific paper."

## Performance ram sale nears

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Kent D. Shelhamer reminded farmers that the state's Second Performance Tested Ram Sale will be held June 3, at the Agriculture Department's Meat Animal Evaluation Center in University Park at 2 p.m.

Shelhamer said that careful selection of a new stud ram is a very important part of overall flock management. "In fact," he said, "it is probably the most important single factor when determining what will happen to the genetic potential of a flock."

"The number one goal of the sheep industry must be to increase the genetic potential of sheep to produce. The genetic potential sets the upper limits which can be obtained from feeding and management."

According to Shelhamer, approximately 87 per cent of the genetic make-up of a lamb comes from the last three generations of lambs used. The traits of most concerns in both commercial and purebred sheep production but be those of

the most economic importance.

"The importance of growth is obvious," the Secretary said. "Increased growth rates mean a shorter feeding period, because sheep gaining weight faster normally convert feed more efficiently."

"However, we also must be concerned about the composition of this growth. Seventy-five to eight-five per cent of the differences observed in the retail yield of lamb carcasses are due to differences in fat trim. It is important to know if the gain is in the form of fat or muscle."

All rams selling in Pennsylvania's Second Performance Tested Ram Sale will be ultrasonically scanned for fat thickness and loin eye area to give the buyer an idea as to composition of weight gain and how one ram compares to another in this category. Individual performance records will be available on all rams in this sale.

"Too many people evaluate the value of a ram by his cost, pedigree, or show winnings rather than his performance," Shelhamer said. "The Pennsylvania sheep industry must concentrate its efforts on more efficient production of a high quality product."

The Second Performance Tested Ram Sale is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the Penn State and the Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers Association.

## Red meat down

HARRISBURG — Red meat production in Pennsylvania during April 1978 totaled 84.3 million pounds, down two per cent from a year earlier according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

Cattle slaughter at 76,000 head was down eight per cent from a year earlier; sheep and lamb slaughter at 9,100 head were down 32 per cent. Calf slaughter at 29,700 head was up three per cent and hog slaughter at 230,900 head was up four per cent.

Commercial red meat production for the United States in April 1978 totaled 3.1 billion pounds, down four per cent from April 1977. Beef production was down four per cent, veal production down 15 per cent, pork production down two per cent, and lamb and mutton production declined 19 per cent.

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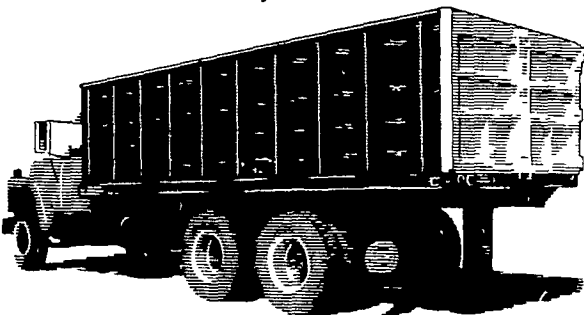
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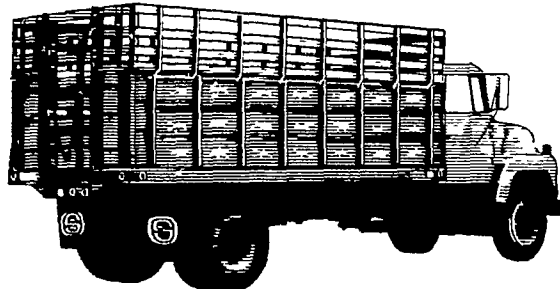
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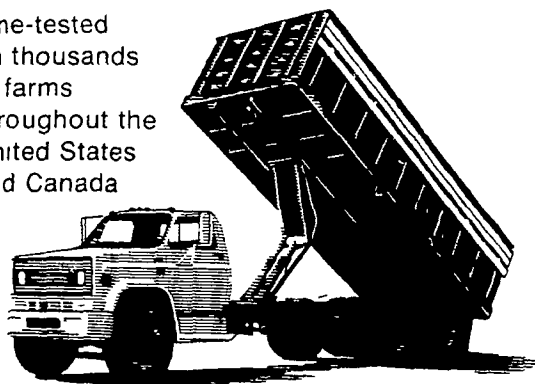
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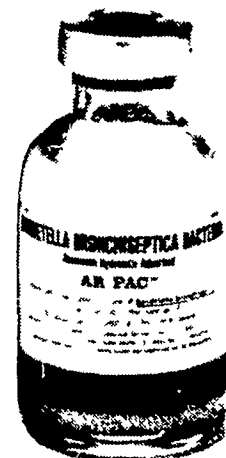
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