

# Meat Board Urges Consumers To Put Study In Perspective

CHICAGO, IL.— The Dec. 13, 1990, edition of the "New England Journal of Medicine" includes a report titled "Relation of Meat, Fat, and Fiber Intake to the Risk of Colon Cancer in a Prospective Study Among Women."

"The issue is not new" said Dr. David Hurt, vice president of research for the National Live Stock and Meat Board. "There has been research since the mid-'70s relating animal fat intake and the risk of colon cancer. Some have suggested a relationship and some have not. And there have been no studies which have supported a cause-and-effect relationship between normal consumption of meat and colon cancer."

Dr. Peter Greenwald, of the National Cancer Institute in an Associated Press story, cautioned against interpreting this study to

mean people should stop eating red meat entirely.

"Meat has important nutrient value," he told AP. "I would be careful about a recommendation that takes out of our diet a lot of important nutrients."

The president of the American Dietetic Association agrees. Mary Abbott Hess told Cable News Network, "This is a great concern for me. Women who think they can substitute meat with a spinach salad for their iron needs are really fooling themselves, because the iron that is available in the vegetable source is not nearly as well utilized as meat."

In fact, the USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services in the recently released revision of "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" provided strong support for including lean meat in a balanced diet. "Eat a variety of

foods in moderation is the basic message," said Hurt.

"The meat and livestock industry has actively responded to consumer needs by producing leaner, lower-in-fat products," said Hurt. Two recent studies illustrate his point: one found beef to be 27 percent leaner at the meat case today than it was in the early 1980s, and the other study found pork (cooked and trimmed) to be 31 percent leaner.

Meanwhile, the survey reported in the Journal is based on information on the incidence of cancer in nurses collected from 1976 to 1986. Of the 88,751 nurses surveyed, there were 150 confirmed cases of colon cancer. The eating patterns of these subjects, recorded during a brief period in 1980, then were evaluated. While the relative statistical risk may have increased, said Hurt, the

actual incidence of cancer in the nurses living independent and widely varied lives is of questionable practical concern.

In addition to progress already being made to provide leaner products, according to Hurt.

• The beef industry has developed a plan to decrease the quantity of trimmable waste fat in the nation's beef supply through a system called "value-based marketing." With proposed marketing system changes, beef production and merchandising will be aligned to meet the beef product preferences of the consumer.

• The pork industry also has focused on producing leaner animals through aggressive industry testing and research. The pork industry goal is to develop a marketing system which would give economics incentive for lean animal production.

• Beef and pork product development, funded with checkoff dollars, continues to focus on research projects in areas such as low-fat product technology to allow the industry to better respond to consumer demands.

• The nutrition research program at the Meat Board has specifically targeted studies on the relationship of saturated fatty acids and the incidence of cancer as a priority for funding. Information from these studies will help the industry respond directly to specific issues surrounding the role of meat in a healthful diet.

"People in the livestock and meat industry, from producers to retailers and restaurant owners, join with the dietetic and health-care community in believing that a balanced, moderate diet is the best approach. And meat should be part of this balanced moderate diet," said Hurt.



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