

Mary Lacy

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March 16, 2001

FDA Commissioner
Dockets Management Branch (HFA 305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fisher's Lane, rm. 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Sir or Madam,,

Re: The approval and use of recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) in dairy cows

Until recently, I truly believed that the Food and Drug Administration was established for the benefit and protection of the public's health. After thoroughly researching the topic of recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH), however, I have been compelled to re-evaluate my beliefs.

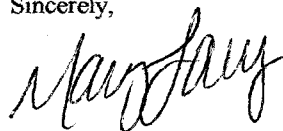
As I am sure you are well aware, rBGH is a synthetic hormone manufactured by a company called Monsanto and ruled by the FDA to be "safe for human consumption". Bovine growth hormone occurs naturally in cows and is the hormone that produces milk which is then sold to people across the nation. Monsanto uses recombinant DNA biotechnology to produce a "replication" of the growth hormone. According to John Scheid at the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine, the FDA relied solely on the information provided by Monsanto to make their decision. The FDA never looked at the raw data from the 90-day rat feeding that took place.¹

Aside from the neglect to acknowledge valid information about the drug, the FDA is also aiding Monsanto in an attempt to maintain the consumers' ignorance. According to Tom McDermott, a spokesman for Monsanto, FDA guidelines restrict the labeling of products as "rBGH free" unless they also state that their milk is not of better quality than that of the companies who do use the hormone. Monsanto sued two small dairy companies, stating a violation of this guideline.²

Contrary to the information reviewed by the FDA, Consumers' Union claims that rBGH can cause mastitis, which is an inflammation of the mammary glands. This condition can cause more pus to be secreted into the milk. As a consumer and a milk drinker, I would like to know if I am spending money on a product that was produced through use of an artificial supplement which may or may not have negative effects on my body. According to the 90-day rat study aforementioned, between 20 and 30 percent of the rats absorbed the hormone into their bloodstream.³ This disputes Monsanto's claim that the drug would be completely broken down by digestive enzymes.⁴

It is the right of the consumer to know if the product they are paying for has been genetically altered in any way. With the abundance of milk already produced by dairy cows in the United States, synthetic hormones do not seem necessary for the farmers to make a profit. I am asking you to re-evaluate your decision on this issue with the best interest of the consumer instead of the manufacturer. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mary Lacy

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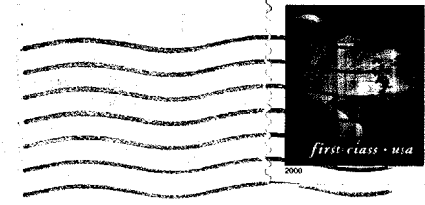
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1. Smith, Gar, "The Monsanto Roundup." Earth Island Journal v14 i1 p 27. Winter-Spring 1999.
2. Downs, Peter, "Monsanto sues to force two small dairies to assure public that hormone additives are safe." St. Louis Journalism Review v23 n166 p13. May 1994.
3. McKenzie, John, "Is Cow's Milk Additive Safe?" ABCNEWS.COM
<http://www.abcnews.go.com/sections/living/DailyNews/wnt_bgh_981215.html>
4. Larsen, Hans R. MSc ChE, "Milk and the Cancer Connection." <<http://vww.com/healthnews/milk.html>>

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