

Beef industry will survive northwest mad cow scare

Pity the poor cowman. Just when the late Dr. Atkins and his diet fad pushed beef prices through the ceiling, they find a mad cow in Washington state.

Millions of pounds of American beef stack up in warehouses, banned by dozens of importing countries.

Consumers shocked by the price of steak opt for chicken — or the other white meat.

Vegetarians wag their fingers and say, "We told you so."

PETA, People for Ethical Treatment of Animals, probably will blame the whole thing on a conspiracy by cruel ranchers.

And needless to say, beef prices have taken a tumble.

But for how long? Many observers say the market will recoup most of last year's gain. They don't see much permanent damage from the mad cow scare.

For one thing, the beef industry has been moving to better track and account for its product. Many experts say the long-term damage to the industry will be minimal.

That doesn't help much if you need to sell a bunch of calves next week, though.

Stronger government regulations and more testing seem certain. There are problems. For one thing, the prions thought to cause the disease are shadowy, protein particles classed as non-living.

Though not considered a life form, prions seem to be able to spread, reproduce and infect other organisms. While it can take years for a cow to become sick after infection, though, people who eat infected parts can go down rather quickly.

The disease, while frightening, is rare even

where it is most common. Britain reported only about 150 deaths before it got control of it's epidemic. In Japan, where all beef slaughtered for the table is tested, only nine infected animals have been discovered.

Science has little understanding of the prion or brain-wasting disease. The infection leaves brain tissue with a sponge-like consistency when viewed through a microscope, but scientists can't explain exactly how it spreads or why similar diseases in other animals don't seem to affect humans.

A version in sheep, called scrapie, has been known for more than 30 years. A big proportion of the deer and elk in north central Colorado are infected with "chronic wasting disease," still another relative. Cannibals of New Guinea were known to pass a similar disease on by eating brain tissue of the dead as much as 65 years ago.

While the link between eating infected tissue and human infection is clear with cows, there is no proof — yet — that humans can contract the disease from deer or sheep.

There is the problem, that "yet."

The government has banned beef parts from cattle feed, hoping to prevent transmission, but infected material might still be fed to pigs, pets or other animals. Why not ban use of brain and nerve tissue entirely?

There is just so much we don't know. Yet people seem determined to eat steak, despite the price. And losing weight has a strong appeal.

The market will recover because Americans like their beef. But the scare hardly seems fair to the cowman.

— Steve Haynes

Next generation plunders china

"Gwamma, gwamma, they's stealin' you blind."

My little nephew (now a junior in high school) wasn't kidding. We were stripping an upstairs bedroom when my mother called from Texas.

Mom was spending the winter in Texas and my sister Marie was watching her home in Concordia.

I had a child in college who needed some bedroom furniture and Mom had a set that hadn't been used since and I left home.

Mom told me to go over to her house and get the stuff whenever I had a chance, so Marie and I were busy moving beds and a dresser from the upstairs of Mom's place to the tiny U-Haul behind my truck.

In the middle of this operation, Mom called and Curtis, who must have been all of 5 or 6 at the time, told on us.

I remember this as I watch my youngest daughter pack up my china for the trip to Lawrence.

"Gwamma, gwamma, she's stealin' me blind."

The china, like that bedroom set, has not been used in years. In fact it has not been unpacked since we moved back to Kansas 10 years ago.

The kids left home and we have another set of good china, so I have just not needed dinnerware for 12.

This set is enormous. It has 24 plates and 12 of everything else that you can think of. There are two sizes of bowls — one for soup and one for fruit. There are cups and saucers and



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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half-size or demitasse cups and saucers. Unfortunately, the lids are broken on both the sugar and coffee pot. This is not bad for a set I got before I was married 32 years ago.

The dishes have silver around the rims and tiny green leaves and white flowers about one-half inch from the rim. The bottoms say Sheffield Fine China, Japan, and Elegance, which I assume is the pattern name.

It is a beautiful set of china, which I used in Kansas City when I entertained the snooty women of the Westweights Ladies Club. It got packed away when we moved to the log home in Colorado and was used only rarely thereafter that.

Now youngest daughter has claimed it and was repacking it and moving it to her home in Lawrence, where we hope it will get more use than it has in my garage.

While I have seen this china in antique stores, it was not especially expensive when Mom bought it for me — more than 30 years ago after I announced my engagement.

Steve told Lindsay to tell all her

friends that the set was purchased at Boogarts in Concordia, a store which has since gone out of business. That is, of course, true. What she isn't to say is that Boogarts was the grocery and the plates, cups and bowls were 39 cents each with a \$10 purchase.

Hey, all the extras added up to quite a sum, but Mom had all her friends buying pieces for me. That's how I ended up with more than 200 pieces of Elegance china fit to serve the snooty gals of the Westweights Ladies Club.

From the Bible

My son, eat thou honey, because it is good; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste: So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. Proverbs 24: 13, 14



There's no place like home

Hi, Honey, we're home!

No matter how humble, home looks pretty good after being in Mexico for a few days. And I always feel humbled after being in Mexico.

I complain about having to "camp out" in our second house while we remodel our home. Meanwhile, the entire house we built for a Mexican family of six is not as big as our front room. I complain about needing new carpeting while Rosa has to sprinkle her floor with water every day to help pack the dirt. I complain that my microwave is practically an antique while the only appliances I saw in Rosa's house were an old electric skillet and a crock pot.

It's not guilt for having so much. It's more that I forget to be grateful for being so fortunate.

—ob—

We made 29 new friends out of the experience. Our telephone briefing with the Casas por Cristo staff before the trip told us we would be working with a team of Mennonites.

Neither Jim nor I knew much about the Mennonite denomination. I have seen a few Mennonite couples in our part of the country; the men had beards and the women wore dresses with little white caps.

Not wanting to offend anyone, Jim determined that if need be, he wouldn't shave for the week and I bought a bandana to use as a scarf and agreed to forego makeup during our time with them.

You can imagine my relief when their team pulled into the parking lot of our rendezvous point and jean-clad, makeup wearing women and clean-shaven men got off the bus.



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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Later that night, Jim shared our secret concerns with the team.

Everyone had a good laugh at our expense and someone said, "Oh, we're the new liberal Mennonites."

It's a very small world. One of the women on the team and I were getting acquainted. You know, the standard "where are you from," "how close is that to (wherever)," and so on. We hadn't talked too long when Elaine said, "Do you know Greg and Yvonne Sumner?"

"Well, sure," I answered. "Greg and I went to Sunday School together and Yvonne was in my office just last week."

Turns out Elaine and her husband Dennis operate an employment agency that places agricultural workers from foreign countries. The Sumners are among their clients.

An added bonus came in the form of a retired husband/wife missionary team who spoke fluent Spanish. Gene and Lillian were great. He helped me get a flat tire repaired and Lillian told Bible stories to the neighborhood children.

One of their daughters, Susan, a personal trainer from Tulsa, made the trip. Her Spanish was very good, too. Susan brought her teen-age

sons, Cade and Logan, who both did man-size jobs.

Lillian's brother Leonard, an electrician, came along, as well as Leonard's wife, Janice. Janice's parents had been missionaries in Mexico, so she, too, spoke Spanish.

There was Jess, the engineer who had such a quick wit and his two daughters, Angie and Nicky; Bob, a retired school principal and his grandson, Dakota; Travis, a truck driver was also the church's bus driver, his wife Sonya, and their kids, Hannah and Josiah; Dianah, another teacher, and bus driver, too; Brad and Melvina plus their two little boys; R.D., a carpenter, and his twelve-year-old son Ashton; high schoolers Chloe and Scott; and trip organizers Bud, who runs a lumber yard, and his wife, Candy.

As soon as we crossed the border and could get cell phone service again, I called our kids to tell them we were back on U.S. soil.

Jennifer asked, "How was the team?" "Oh, they were wonderful," I said.

"You say that about every team," she replied.

Yes, I know I do. Because it's true.

Diseases have great press agent

Let's hear it for the overrated disease.

Every time you pick up the morning paper, there's some new threat to human health.

It's hard to say which is the most overrated, but if any disease actually killed or even sickened as many people as the hype would have you believe, we'd be in real trouble.

Where should we start? Anthrax?

There's no doubt that the purified anthrax some wacko sent through the mail two years ago was deadly. Trace amounts left in postal equipment apparently killed at least two or three people who never saw one of the original letters.

But the anthrax powder is more of a poison than a disease. The bacterium is deadly enough at "weapons grade," but the disease itself is hard to spread and fairly easy to treat.

So much for the anthrax scare.

West Nile virus?

For all the hysteria the last couple of summers, the number of serious cases has numbered in the dozens in this area. It's not a nice thing to get, but it's no epidemic.

The disease is deadly enough for birds, but most larger animals — horses and humans seem to be the most susceptible — recover quickly. Any virus has its risks, but West Nile is not going to depopulate the



Along the Sappa

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U.S.

SARS, or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome? Virus caused, sort of a heavy-duty cold, SARS is a nasty infection, but it's been successfully contained so far.

Again, it's not something you'd volunteer to have, but SARS is not the Black Death, or bubonic plague.

Neither is plague these days, come to think of it.

Endemic in many areas, plague seldom bothers humans today. Better sanitation and limited contact with rodents has stopped its spread.

Just don't play with prairie dogs.

Hantavirus scares me. Like the African infection ebola, it's often fatal. The infection is painful. No one wants to be that sick.

But unless you play in deer mouse droppings, it's hard to get hantavirus. It doesn't seem to be spreading to the human population with any great speed. Nor has ebola left

its African homeland.

And then there's mad cow disease, more properly known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy. It's a nasty little infection, caused by a particle known as a "prion" that defies definition.

Sheep, deer, elk and people all get some form of this disease, and it seems to spread in most species by eating brain tissue.

Or maybe not. No one knows.

But the number of humans infected is infinitesimally small compared to the number of people who eat beef, venison, elk and mutton.

It's a good guess that the next big flu epidemic will take more people than all the others combined, but influenza is more of a common-type disease, hardly worthy of scare headlines and 5 o'clock treatment.

That should put the trendy diseases in perspective. Ah, but where's the fun in that?

Reader takes issue with editorial

To the Editor:

This is in response to the recent editorial entitled "New Proposals Make Sense":

The first proposal would require a public vote on any increase in taxes or fees. We already have elections to choose representatives to deal with these issues, which tend to be complex and difficult.

To expect the public to educate themselves to all the issues involved is unrealistic. The result would be to tie our representatives' hands so they would be unable to respond to public needs — just as they are in California.

The second proposal would require a two-thirds vote in the Legislature to increase a tax. This will

make our government unresponsive, unable to do the will of the majority of voters. A minority of one-third plus one in either house could prevent action. Notice the proposal is not to prevent an increase or a decrease of taxes.

The figures concerning state growth are bogus. Yes, the state budget has made a huge gain, because the state took over funding for local schools. A fair comparison would have to compare state and local educational spending then to state spending now — with a very

different result. Keep in mind that inflation is decreasing the value of money so to remain even, more dollars are needed, which does not mean government has increased.

Both proposals are bad ideas that would change our government, a government that has served us well for many generations. These proposals are not conservative, which tries to protect what we have. These proposals are radical ideas that would undermine our state's future.

Bob Strevey
Norcat

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Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri.
(Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)

Subscriptions: One year, \$28 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$32 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$35 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$20 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes, publishers
Official newspaper of Oberlin, Jennings, Norcat, Dresden and Decatur County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association, Nebraska Press Association and Inland Press Association.