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EU food safety experts say **NO** to cloned meat

By Sean Poulter

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Selling meat and milk from cloned animals and their offspring is expected to be rejected by EU watchdogs today.

Experts at the European Food Safety Authority are understood to have raised serious questions about animal welfare and food safety.

The conclusions represent a major U-turn for an organisation which initially supported clone farming in a draft report earlier this year.



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Fourth-generation cloned pigs - DEFRA has so far refused to ensure cloned products do not reach consumers

The authority's investigation followed a Daily Mail report in January 2007 that the offspring of cloned milking cows had been born on a UK farm.

Last month, this newspaper also revealed that eight 'clone farm' calves have been born in Britain over the past 18 months. Frozen embryos taken from the clones of prizewinning Holstein cows in the U.S. were flown to the UK and implanted into farm animals.

One source close to the European Commission investigation explained the expected Uturn, saying:

'EFSA says it has increased concerns regarding animal welfare and possible-concerns regarding food safety due to the limited data available.'

Animal welfare campaigners welcomed the change of view and called on the Government to take action to keep food from clones and their offspring off dinner plates.

The RSPCA and Compassion in World Farming are among a number of groups opposed to animal cloning for food.

Joyce D'Silva of CiWF said: 'We know cloning is responsible for huge amounts of animal suffering. With every successful birth, we know there is at least one other animal that did not make it.'

'Many either die before they are born or soon after because of organ failure. It is time for Britain and the European Commission to take a strong stance to keep clones and their offspring out of the food supply.'

The food and farming department, DEFRA, has refused so far to ensure products do not reach consumers.

A study published by the Food Standards Agency last month flagged up widespread opposition to clone farming and food.

The research found that the more consumers learned about cloning, the greater and more widespread were the objections.

Steve Griggs, who led the project, said: 'The majority of people came to the conclusion that they would not want to eat such food. There was a strong sense from the public that this represents a quantum leap.'

'They struggled to identify any convincing benefits for them as consumers.'

On the issue of food, Dr Griggs said opinions were strongly affected by the scandal over human BSE and the attempted introduction of GM products without proper checks and consultation.

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