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## DOH says no to cloned edibles

**NOT COPYING US:** The US FDA is expected to approve products from cloned animals for human consumption, but they will not appear on Taiwanese shelves anytime soon

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An expected decision from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to declare cloned animals safe to eat will not affect Taiwan's policy on food produced from such animals, a Department of Health (DOH) official said yesterday.

"We have taken a go-slow approach and it will be a long long time -- if ever -- before food from cloned animals is allowed on the shelves [here]," Bureau of Food Sanitation (BFS) Director Cheng Huei-wen (鄭慧文) said.

"The US decision will not sway our judgement," Cheng said.

The *Wall Street Journal* re-ported on Friday that the US FDA is expected to declare "as early as next week" that milk and meat from cloned animals are safe for human consumption.

The administration reached the decision after considering the question for more than six years, the paper said.

However, many consumers strongly reject the idea of eating cloned animals. As a result, there has been scant interest from businesses bringing cloned animal products to the market here, Cheng said.

"That would be the first step -- expert panels assessing the safety of the technology. And the products would be the next step. Then we would have to assess whether or not introducing these products would be advantageous as a whole," he said.

Even if the cloning technology is perfected and the products are found safe to eat by expert panels, strong consumer concerns about the products would be taken into account by the bureau in assessing whether or not to allow them to be sold.

"Many people are strongly bothered by the idea of eating a cloned animal," Cheng said.

"Those concerns, while they may be moral rather than scientific, also carry some weight in our decisions."

The only kinds of genetically modified food currently approved for human consumption in this country are varieties of corn and soybeans, Cheng said.

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