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In reference to: House Bill 1499
Labeling of Food Containing a Product of Cloned Animals

Presented to: Maryland House
Health and Government Operations Committee

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The American Anti-Vivisection Society (AAVS), founded in 1883, is a national non-profit animal advocacy organization that educates students, grassroots groups, individuals, parents, educators, legislators, the media, and members of the scientific community about the use of animals in science and promotes the development of alternative methods to animal use.

We submit this testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill 1499, sponsored by Delegates Boteler, Aumann, Frank, Impallaria, Kach, Niemann, Shewell, Stein, and Weir. Given the significant adverse impact to animal health and welfare, we do not believe that animals should be cloned for food. However, if products from cloned animals or their offspring are allowed on the market, these products must be labeled so that consumers and food producers can choose whether or not they want to support this technology.

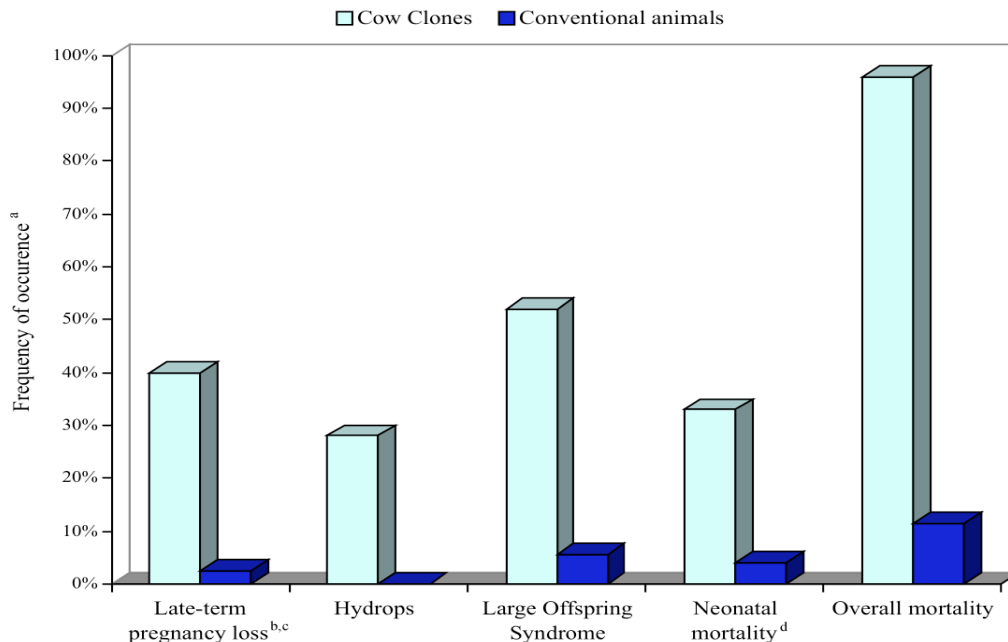
Scientific studies consistently demonstrate that animals involved in the cloning process suffer greatly.

More than 95% of cloning attempts fail, resulting in animals who suffer from a litany of health problems and deformities. Both the surrogate mothers who carry the pregnancies and the cloned animals themselves are harmed in the process, and there have been no significant improvements over time.

- Approximately 40% of clone pregnancies are lost in the second or third trimester, jeopardizing the welfare of the surrogate mothers. Painful and distressful labor and surgical intervention for delivery (C-section) are also far more likely. Often, the surrogate mother dies as a result of her pregnancy.
- Hydrops, a typically fatal condition in which the surrogate mother and/or fetus balloons with fluid, occurs in 1 of 7,500 cow pregnancies normally, but in 1 of every 3 to 4 clone pregnancies.
- Large Offspring Syndrome, a typically fatal condition in which the animal is grossly oversized, occurs in less than 6% of cows normally, but in over half of cloned cows. It is associated with a host of abnormalities, including deformed heads and limbs, kidney and liver dysfunction, heart problems, respiratory difficulties, and immune system deficiencies.
- Nearly one third of cloned calves who survive birth die within the first 6 months, despite receiving extensive veterinary care.

All told, 1 out of every 2-4 animals involved in the cloning process suffer from serious abnormalities and diseases that are seen only rarely in the general population (see graph).

Frequency of Health Problems and Premature Death in Clones vs. Conventional Animals



^a Percentages are approximate and based on data provided in the FDA Risk Assessment, except where otherwise noted.
^b Expressed as a percentage of pregnancies confirmed at Day 90 of gestation.
^c Based on data from the FDA RA, Panarace et al. (2007), Lawrence et al. (2005), Heyman et al. (2002), and Wells et al. (1999).
^d Expressed as a percentage of live-born calves.

The European Food Safety Authority reached a similar conclusion earlier this year, stating in its opinion on animal cloning that the health and welfare of a significant proportion of cloned animals is adversely affected.

The public has concerns about the morality and ethics of animal cloning.

A 2006 survey conducted for AAVS revealed that 46% of adults have ethical and moral objections to cloning animals for food. A survey conducted for Kraft Foods, also in 2006, obtained similar results. In addition, while polls routinely show that two-thirds of Americans are opposed to animal cloning, the AAVS survey found that disapproval increased to 88% when respondents learned that animal suffering is involved.

The ethics debate stems from a prevailing sentiment among the public that just because we can clone animals doesn't mean we should. In addition to their animal welfare concerns, many people feel that cloning is 'not natural' or is 'playing God.' Many are also concerned that cloning animals involves the same technology as creating transgenic animals and as cloning humans, which means that supporting animal cloning helps pave the way for these controversial applications.

The European Group on Ethics, which released its expert opinion on animal cloning earlier this year, concluded that, largely due to the animal suffering involved, it could find no ethical justification to clone animals for food.

Because of their concerns about animal cloning, the majority of consumers want to avoid purchasing products from cloned animals or their offspring.

According to a 2007 survey conducted by the International Food Information Council, 53% of Americans are unlikely to buy meat, milk, or eggs from a cloned animal *even if* the FDA determines that such products are safe. Similarly, 51% are unlikely to buy products from the offspring of cloned animals.

It has been suggested that those people who want to avoid products from cloned animals or their offspring can simply look for the organic label, as products from these animals are excluded from the definition of organic. However, few restaurants sell organic food, there is a limited supply of organic products in most grocery stores, and the cost is prohibitive for many consumers and producers. As such, this is not a realistic or satisfactory proposal, as it places a significant burden on those people who are not responsible for the technology.

Products from cloned animals and their offspring must be clearly labeled to allow consumers to make informed decisions about the foods they choose to purchase.

Conclusion

Consumers increasingly want to know how their food is produced so that they can make decisions that reflect their values. Because of their concerns about animal welfare, morality, ethics, impacts on family farmers, and food safety, the majority of people do not want to support the cloning industry, and they should have that right.

For these reasons, AAVS urges you to support HB 1499 and require that food products from cloned animals and their offspring (*at least* through two generations) are clearly labeled.

Passage of HB 1499 will help protect consumers, food producers, and animals, as well as help support Maryland's Senior Senator Barbara Mikulski's efforts to pass similar labeling legislation in the U.S. Congress.