

Close Window

Send To Printer

Major food company says it won't sell milk from clones

Staff and wire reports
Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

[Article Launched:](#)

Cattle cloning is happening across the nation, as colleges and companies reproduce the best of their livestock, but that doesn't mean the public is ready for the products.

Dean Foods, of Dallas, producers of Land O'Lakes and Horizon Organic among dozens of other brands, said last week that consumers don't want milk from cloned animals.

At least for Californians, it's really a non-issue as there are no cloned cows in the state and the cost is prohibitive.

But, according to a Cal Poly Pomona professor, there are benefits to the concept of cloning cattle.

"Cloning could have a positive impact on the environment," said Cedric Matsushima, interim department chairman of animal and veterinary sciences at Cal Poly.

He said it's a step in the right direction and eventually may have an impact on the rise in the Earth's temperature because of certain gases in the atmosphere.

Cows are a producer of many of the gases that trap energy from the sun. Matsushima said for every cloned cow added to a herd, a farmer could take away 1<MD+,%30,%55,%70>1/<MD-,%0,%55,%70>2 cows.

"For every herd you have high producers and low producers," he said, but cloning changes the variation by reproducing only the high producer.

But those aren't things considered by the consumer, at least for now, according to Dean Foods' research.

"Numerous surveys have shown that Americans are not interested in buying dairy products that contain milk from cloned cows and Dean Foods is responding to the needs of our consumers," the company said in a statement.

Federal scientists said there is virtually no difference between clones and conventional cows, pigs or goats. The Food and Drug Administration gave preliminary approval to meat and milk from cloned animals and could grant final approval by year's end.

Other companies such as Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream and Organic Valley previously have said they oppose milk from clones.

Dean Foods spokeswoman Marguerite Copel said the company respects the FDA, "but we've got a customer and consumer base."

In California, the cloning industry is a non-event, according to Michael Marsh, chief executive officer for Western United Dairymen, a Modesto-based dairy farm association.

"There are no cattle in California who are cloned," Marsh said, and right now acquiring a cloned cattle is far from cost-effective.

"A cloned dairy cow cost somewhere between \$30,000 and \$50,000, and the non-cloned cows are selling at around \$1,700 a head," he said.

He is confident of the research done by the FDA that human consumption of cloned cows are safe.

Bob Feenstra, president of AG Concepts Inc., in Ontario, an agricultural company that supplies dairy farms in Northern California, said in December that dairymen have been performing selective breeding of cattle for years.

"They breed for product and breed for health, and they're always looking to improve," he said, adding that cloning is the wave of the future.

"It's something that the dairymen have to decide," Feenstra said.

Chino is home to several dairies that ship their milk to Land O' Lakes, which provides milk to Dean Foods Co. Of the dairy owners who could be reached, all declined to comment on Dean Foods' position on milk from cloned cows.

Staff writer Shelli DeRobertis and the Associated Press contributed to this article.