

# Cattlemen Beef About Diet Warnings

By Ferdie J. Deering

A friend who had a heart pacemaker inserted a few weeks ago upset his doctor by telling him he ate beef roast and steaks regularly, as well as two eggs for breakfast daily.

The doctor immediately prescribed a low cholesterol diet, apparently without checking the need for it. This upset my friend; he returned to his internist whose records showed his cholesterol levels for 10 years. New tests showed little change, still within the normal range. The 80-year-old man is still eating beef and eggs and improving.

That might sound like a medical case history, but it is an agricultural problem. It is being debated as vigorously as the farm program, and a solution may be as hard to find.

Cattlemen argue that it is an error for doctors to advise patients to stop eating beef without a good reason, just as it would be to tell them to smoke in order to get cancer.

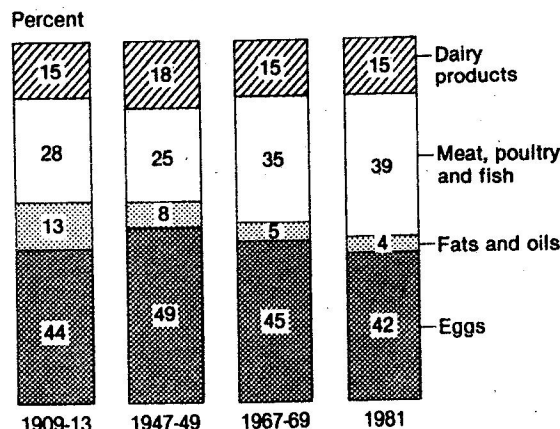
Here is a sample of how the debate is going:

**American Heart Association (1984):** At least half of all American adults have higher than desirable levels of cholesterol in the blood and are in a "zone of accelerating risk" of developing coronary disease.

**National Cattlemen's Association:** Three ounces of cooked lean beef contain 73 milligrams of cholesterol. The human body needs some 1,000 mg of cholesterol daily. The body normally will manufacture the difference between what it needs and what is consumed.

**National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (1984):** Virtually all

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Figures supplied by the U.S. Department of Agriculture show cholesterol in the American food supply by food group in percentages. Per capita consumption of cholesterol has dropped from 507 milligrams from 1909-13 to 484 milligrams in 1981.

Americans have too high levels of cholesterol, including those with readings that have in the past been considered normal.

**Dr. B.C. Breidenstein,** director, Research and Nutrition Information, National Live Stock and Meat Board: Based on a 2,000-calorie diet, an individual would have to eat seven, 3-oz. servings of cooked lean beef per day to get more than 30 percent of his calories from the fat in the beef. Red meats as currently consumed do not contribute prohibitive amounts of fats, saturated fats or dietary cholesterol to the American diet.

**Oklahoma Heart Center (1984):** In a press conference, blamed beefsteak as being one of the foods causing Oklahomans to run a higher risk of heart disease than the average American.

**Frank Arney,** exec-

utive director, Oklahoma Beef Commission: Research shows that today's beef is leaner, lower in calories, lower in fat and lower in cholesterol. Beef is an excellent source of high quality protein, iron, zinc, B vitamins and other nutrients essential to good health.

**American Heart Association (1982):** Published a "Rationale" intended to serve as definitive support for dietary recommendations, one of which was intended for use across the population of healthy individuals, including reduced cholesterol.

**National Live Stock & Meat Board (1985):** Published "Diet, Blood Lipids and Atherosclerosis," a treatise citing scientific data intended to refute many conclusions suggested in the

American Heart Association publication.

Each side in the controversy claims to have valid research supporting its arguments, and each spends considerable effort and time attempting to establish its position.

It is the Oklahoma cow-calf producer and others in the livestock industry who pay the cost. Sensational announcements sometimes imply all will be well if Americans will just stop eating beef, drinking milk, or switch to some nostrum.

These seem to get more attention in publications and in broadcasts than facts to clarify or rebut them.

Both misleading claims and substantiated facts influence consumer menus, thereby affecting demand

and prices of beef, milk, poultry, eggs and other foods.

When asked to name the biggest obstacle to meat consumption, Arney cited "the perceived price difference between beef and poultry or pork." He compared prices to show that beef is competitive and said, "I don't think beef is expensive."

The Beef Commission is a state agency supported by funds paid by producers when cattle or calves are marketed. It participates in national advertising and provides point-of-sale beef promotion materials to 500 Oklahoma retail stores.

"There is no one to inform people who been given wrong information about beef or the diet other than the industry itself," Arney said. "For consumers, beef is and always has been a healthful, wholesome, nutritious product."