

## Western Watch

by Dennis Halladay

### Self-inflicted stupidity.

Scream, sigh or cry – take your pick, they all apply.

In the 30 years I've been writing about the Western dairy industry, nothing comes remotely close to inflicting the disappointment, frustration and sadness that this one does:

On January 23 the board of directors of the nation's second largest dairy cooperative sent a letter to its members saying effective immediately it would not accept milk produced by cloned cows. It further stated that on August 1 it would no longer accept milk from rBST-supplemented cows, and members must sign a statement saying they do not use the product. Producers who wish to continue using it have two options: Pay a handling fee for the co-op to move their milk into markets that accept it, or terminate their membership.

So begins the lynching of sound and approved science.

No matter which state you dairy in or what co-op you belong to, this decision affects you. No matter how many cows you have, it affects you. No matter which side of the biotechnology fence you're on, it affects you. And like it or not, the ripples that will spread out from this low point in our history will most certainly impact your future.

Pandora's box is open. The dike is leaking, there aren't enough fingers to stop the flow, and we're all going to get wet. But we aren't the only ones. This sets a precedent that will negatively effect **all** of animal agriculture – cows, pigs, chickens, you name it.

Quite simply, what has happened is we've told the terrorists, "you win". Their distortion and manipulation tactics have beaten science, fact and reason. We not only surrendered after a battle we merely went through the motions in, but we also neutered our technological future.

This has nothing to do with being for or against rBST, it's about a segment of agriculture that has embraced, relied upon, and benefitted from technology and innovation perhaps more than any other, now abandoning safe and approved science.

This isn't about "giving the market what it wants", it's about caving in to agendas orchestrated by groups who want nothing to do with dairying or any part of animal agriculture except to see them eliminated.

It's about consumers being manipulated to believe and say what others want them to – and never seeing the strings that are attached to them.

It's about turning our backs on every technological investment any company has ever made to give us tools to manage cows better and more profitably. Remember those tools fondly, because why would anyone ever want to invest in us again?

It's about dairy producers giving up their right to choose what they use to run their businesses, and allowing decision-making to be done by people who want to see animal agriculture wiped out.

It's about clinging to market

share instead of continuing to work together to ensure future viability for the entire industry.

It's about ignorance winning out over facts. It's about half-truths prevailing over full truths. It's about fiction being made more real than reality.

The lynching of sound science may start with rBST and cloning, but what safe and approved tools will you be told to give up next? Estrus synchronization? Embryo transfer? Sexed semen? Dry cow products? Antibiotics period?

Ultimately, my bet is on everything that involves a needle.

Does it eventually include A.I., machine milking, teat dip, and anything besides pasture feeding? What about herd size?

Start working on becoming an organic dairy, because that's the next stop for this train. Not far behind will be investigative reports exposing the fraud of some "no rBST" affidavits and trashing the credibility of dairying and animal agriculture even more.

This is just the first step down a slippery one-way slope to oblivion that doesn't end with rBST or biotechnology, but when everyone in America is eating only salads and drinking only soy milk.

Please send me your letters and e-mails on this, because I **really** want to hear from you – and it's tough to reprint phone calls.

What do you think? My telephone number is 951-656-7320, my fax is 951-656-7332, and my e-mail is HoardsWest@AOL.com.