

NEWS BEEF BEEF

By Mat Thomas

Taxing Animals

■ **Meat remains a staple** of the American diet in large measure because the government provides subsidies to factory farms for land, water, oil and other resources to keep consumer prices low. Producing a meat-based diet is so resource intensive that, in a truly free market, hamburger meat would cost about \$35 a pound. The hidden expenses, amounting to billions of dollars a year, are picked up by taxpayers—even those who see animal agribusiness as an unjust industry that slaughters innocent creatures, pollutes the planet and makes people sick. Representative Adrian Smith (R-NE) hopes to expand these privatized privileges with HR 1217, a bill that would reward concentrated animal-feeding operations simply for complying with the Environmental Protection Act. If you think that corporations rather than taxpayers should foot the bill for adhering to environmental regulations, then urge your member of Congress to oppose this industry-driven proposal. *Dairy Herd Management magazine*



Go Veg, Al Gore!

■ **At this year's Academy Awards**, former US Vice President Al Gore shared the winners' limelight for *An Inconvenient Truth*, the popular and critically acclaimed film that has made global warming one of the millennium's hottest topics, and which won the Oscar for Best Documentary. Unfortunately, there is another inconvenient truth the movie completely ignores—the fact that, according to the United Nations, the animal agriculture industry emits more greenhouse gasses than all the automobiles and trucks in the world combined. Leave it to the folks at PETA to point out this reality to the ex-veep-turned-environmental-crusader in an open letter, and to remark that Gore's own omnivorous diet contributes to glacial melting. PETA's missive urged Gore to go veg as a matter of ethical consistency, and even included an invitation to a faux fried-chicken dinner. Attentive readers will note that PETA's message echoes sentiments that VegNews first expressed in our September+October 2006 issue. goveg.com

Are You Being Greened?

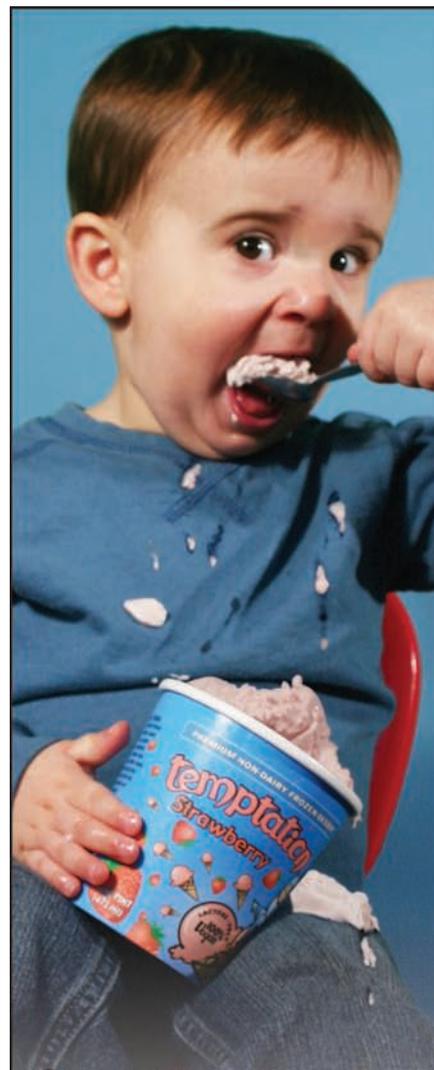
■ **Restaurants comprise about one-tenth** of the US domestic economy and collectively consume more energy than any other industry in the retail sector. That is why Michael Oshman, founder of the 17-year-old Green Restaurant Association (GRA), has no reservations about the non-profit's mission: working directly with businesses to reduce the industry's ecological footprint. To earn GRA certification, a restaurant or chain must make four annual operational changes promoting sustainability, such as switching to energy-efficient lighting or low-flow plumbing; purchasing non-toxic, biodegradable cleaning products; or offering more plant-based menu options. "Eating low on the food chain makes a huge difference environmentally," says Oshman, a longtime vegan. "When GRA encourages non-vegan restaurants to offer meatless meals, we emphasize that this is a great way to do something positive while simultaneously attracting a growing base of customers who are concerned about the impact of their food choices on animals, the planet and their health." dinegreen.com



Al Gore photo courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

Mad Milk

■ **Scientists at the Swiss biotechnology firm Alicon AG** recently discovered free-floating prion proteins in commercial milk, raising new concerns that mad cow disease (bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE) could be transmitted to humans who consume dairy products. While the concentration of prions in milk remains very low, these protein particles were detected in milk that was homogenized, pasteurized and sold in supermarkets. Further tests are being conducted to determine whether the prions found were of the normal or potentially infectious variety. The news comes at a time when the USDA is drastically scaling back its mad-cow screening and tracking efforts based on the claim that the number of diseased animals in the country's food supply is "extraordinarily low." Worldwide, more than 200,000 cattle have contracted mad cow disease, and at least 150 people have died from BSE since it was first identified in Great Britain more than 20 years ago. *PR Newswire*



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Trimming the TransFat

■ **Lawmakers around the country** are taking aim against trans-fatty acids, a type of mono- or polyunsaturated fat that increases the risk of heart disease. At least 23 states are considering bills to limit or ban artificial trans fats sold in stores or served in restaurants and school cafeterias. While improving public health, these measures could also increase production costs for vegan eateries and food makers that cook with partially hydrogenated plant oils. New York City passed a law in December 2006 to phase out all artificial trans fats by July 2008. Freedom Tripodi, owner of vegan fast food restaurant Food Swings in the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn, is concerned about paying more for non-hydrogenated margarines and passing the costs on to customers. "If that happens, it will reinforce the argument that being vegan is more expensive, which is something that we have worked very hard to debunk," he says. *USA Today*





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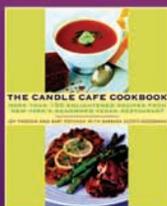

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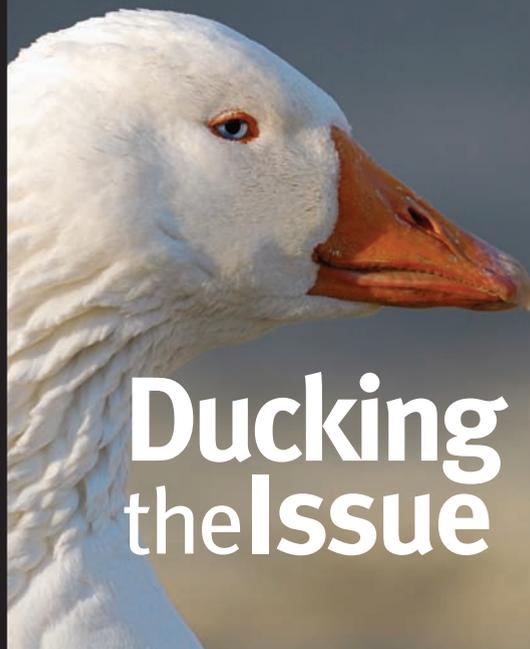
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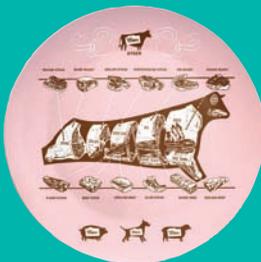


Ducking the Issue

■ **The diseased duck or goose liver** “delicacy” known as foie gras continues to create controversy. However, this time the debate is not over whether force-feeding waterfowl to make their organs expand is cruel, but whether it is humane to let them stuff themselves with as much food as they want to eat. Foie gras is traditionally made by shoving metal tubes down birds’ throats and pumping in massive quantities of food, fattening their livers. A new Spanish method allows geese to feed at will just before their winter migration cycle, during which they naturally gorge in preparation for the journey ahead. However, foie gras “artisans” kill them instead and harvest their organs. California’s foie gras ban starts in 2012, but the law makes an exception for foie gras made without force-feeding. If California’s producers adopt Spain’s technique, bans on force-feeding—rather than foie gras—may be the next big issue on the animal-welfare agenda. *The Daily Telegraph (UK)*

Whole&Oats

■ **If you can't beat 'em, join 'em... or, get bought out by 'em!** That is the fate that befell natural grocer Wild Oats Marketplace, which was recently purchased by Whole Foods Market for approximately \$700 million. With 110 stores in North America and annual sales of about \$1.2 billion, the Wild Oats acquisition is the largest in Whole Foods’ 27-year history, and will make the Fortune 500 company—already the country’s largest natural and organic foods retailer—an even bigger force in this rapidly expanding industry. Converting Wild Oats stores will enable Whole Foods to enter new geographic areas and saturate smaller regions like the Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountain States and Florida. As part of its standard rebranding process, Whole Foods will remodel Wild Oats stores before reopening them as Whole Foods Markets. Once the transition is complete, Whole Foods Market will have more than 300 stores in the US and Canada. wholefoodsmarket.com



Persuasive Plates

■ **While you probably won't see** these classy commemorative plates featured on the Home Shopping Network anytime soon, the Food for Thought dishware set has become something of a bestseller thanks to vegetarians who appreciate the not-so-subtle ironies of our carnivorous culture. Each of the four pastel plates features an anatomical illustration of an animal such as one might see in a butcher’s shop, with cuts of meat sectioned off and labeled in precise instructional detail. Of the four plates, the green one paints the most graphic image of all: a drawing of a legless canine in profile. The disturbing image reminds diners that the differences between the family dog and other “food” animals are negligible. One is only left to wonder why they didn’t make a fifth plate showing where a steak would be sliced from a human. *The New York Times*

FauxFur orFido?

■ **Fashionistas beware:** Your coat labeled as faux fur may actually be made from dogs. A recent exposé by The Humane Society of the United States revealed that many garments from top designers sold in major retail outlets were actually produced using the hides of domestic dogs and Asiatic raccoon dogs, but mislabeled as faux fur. Researchers conducted mass spectrometry tests to determine that garments by designers Tommy Hilfiger, Andrew Marc, Michael Kors and others were actually trimmed with canine fur, mostly from Chinese farms. HSUS investigators analyzed a total of 25 coats, all but one of which turned out to be either mislabeled or wrongfully advertised. In 2000, the US banned the sale of dog and cat fur, and intentional importation carries a hefty \$10,000 fine for each violation. However, none of the designers or stores involved (including Nordstrom, Lord & Taylor, Macy's and JC Penney) have been charged. *Associated Press*



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we wish to see in the world."*

Gandhi



Meow Zedong

■ Though not traditionally known as a haven of animal rights, China may be sitting on the cusp of another cultural revolution that promotes greater respect for other species. In 2006, the Year of the Dog, hundreds protested in the streets of the capital when tens of thousands of canine companions were brutally killed in a massive rabies cull. More recently, more than 100 members of the group "Love Kitty" surrounded a market where cats were being slaughtered for their meat and fur. After a confrontation and subsequent negotiation with police, more than 400 felines were rescued by the animal-welfare group. Delegates to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference this year called for bans on bear-bile farming and the consumption of shark fin. With the 2008 Olympic games scheduled this summer in Beijing, animal advocates from all over the world are pressuring the Chinese government to pass laws protecting animals from abuse. *South China Morning Post* **VN**

Mat Thomas is a San Francisco-based freelance writer. Read more of his writing at animalrighter.org.