

# NEWS BEEF BEEF

By Mat Thomas

## Cookin' Up Cancer

■ The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) has filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court to make California restaurants comply with a state law requiring businesses to warn consumers when their products contain a known carcinogen. The Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act, passed by voters on a ballot initiative in 1986, helps keep toxic industrial pollution out of ground water, and also protects citizens' right to know when a cancer-causing agent is present in other edibles. One of these carcinogens, PhIP, forms when animal flesh is grilled at high temperatures. The most concentrated PhIP levels are found in cooked chicken, and PCRM maintains that the law must require restaurants to post "clear and reasonable warnings" on their food. President and chief executive of the California Restaurant Association Jot Condie says enforcement of the law would cause many restaurants "to take [chicken] off the menu." *Reuters*



## The End of Animal Testing

■ Every year in the US, approximately 10 million animals are used to test the toxicity of chemical compounds in consumer products and pharmaceuticals, but a new proposal by three government agencies could someday reduce that number to zero. The Environmental Protection Agency, the National Toxicology Program, and the National Institutes of Health have joined forces to phase out animal-testing methods over the next decade. In their place, scientists would grow human-cell cultures in a lab, then expose them to lasers and analyze their reactions with computers. Because this technique enables thousands of chemicals to be tested at the same time, the agencies say this will be less expensive and time-consuming than injecting toxic substances into living organisms, yet also yield more reliable results. The EPA is verifying the method's accuracy by evaluating chemicals already tested on animals, and expects to complete the transition's first phase later this year. *USA Today*



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## Soy for Strong Bones

■ Recent research supports claims that consumption of soy isoflavones promotes skeletal health. One study of menopausal women published in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* found that daily consumption of more than 90 milligrams of soy correlated with a significant increase in spine bone-mineral density for menopausal women—an average of 20.6 milligrams more per square centimeter than control subjects given placebos. Another study in the journal *Nutrition Research* indicated that young women who regularly ate soy products also increased their bone-mineral density. This small study, which tracked the eating habits of 34 young women over the course of two years, is the first to clinically evaluate soy nutrition over multiple 24-hour periods, versus typical studies which rely on data from questionnaires. *nutraingredients.com*





## Closed-Circuit Killing

■ **In the wake of the Westland/Hallmark slaughterhouse scandal** that triggered the largest beef recall in US history, the USDA is considering a Senate committee proposal to put video cameras in slaughterhouses to enforce animal-welfare and food-safety regulations. Questions about who would have access to the footage, how it would be monitored, and where cameras would be placed have yet to be answered, but Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer says he is in favor of the plan if surveillance will prevent lawbreaking. An undercover investigator with a video camera captured graphic footage showing workers at the Westland/Hallmark slaughterhouse forcing dairy cows too sick or injured to stand into killing pens with the aid of forklifts. A statement by the Senate committee noted that they had first proposed installing cameras in slaughter plants in 2005, and that the abuses seen at Westland/Hallmark could have been averted if the USDA had followed their advice earlier. *CNN*

## Poultry Politics

■ **In 2006, Arizona voters** passed the Humane Treatment of Farm Animals Act, a ballot initiative that outlawed veal crates for infant cows and gestation crates for pregnant pigs, but a new bill in the state legislature seeks to prevent citizens from enacting new laws to improve the welfare of chickens in battery cages and growing houses. If successful, Republican State Senator Jake Flake's S.B. 1373 would subvert the democratic process by putting all decision-making power over the lives of egg-laying hens and "broiler" chickens in the hands of a newly formed Arizona Poultry Husbandry Council largely comprised of meat- and egg-industry representatives. Senator Flake introduced a similar bill in 2006 that would have prevented voters from passing any more propositions affecting agribusiness practices in all segments of production, and retroactively nullified the veal/gestation-crate ban. However, legislators gave the proposal a thumbs-down, something animal welfare reformists hope they'll do again. *Humane Society Legislative Fund*

## SaveUsAquaman!

■ **With fish rapidly disappearing** from the oceans and many aquatic species on the brink of extinction, a report by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature warns that one-fifth of the world's commercial fish are caught and sold illegally. The group's investigation revealed incidents of fishermen bribing government officials, mislabeling fish, and smuggling contraband caches underneath batches of legally caught fish. Europe has become the largest global consumer of seafood, and with fish prices doubling and even tripling in just the last few years, the black market is booming. In 2007, the EU banned fishermen from harvesting endangered bluefin tuna in Atlantic and Mediterranean waters to save the native species from extinction. Yet, industrial-sized fishing vessels with nets as long as six miles continue to ply their trade on the open ocean, often ignoring quotas and flouting the law. Experts suggest satellite surveillance of "pirate" fleets to keep them in line. *The New York Times*



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## FlurryOver Hedgehogs



■ After dozens of German hedgehogs got their heads caught in the discarded plastic lids of McDonald's McFlurry cups and died of starvation, the fast-food giant agreed to redesign the packaging of its popular frozen dessert to prevent the nocturnal rodents from turning it into a lethal neck brace. In response to reports of McFlurry-related hedgehog deaths, Friends of the Earth Germany (BUND) lobbied McDonald's to produce a container that would not wind up strangling the animals. Trying to create an opening that is bigger than a spoon but smaller than a hedgehog's head, the company experimented with various lid sizes, as well as a top with moveable flaps that would enable the animals to go in and out of the entryway. Eventually, they chose a container design that McDonald's is already using in the UK, which was introduced after the British Hedgehog Preservation Society complained of the same deadly problem. *Spiegel Online*

## Licenses to Let Live

■ There's vegan food, vegan clothes, and now, vegan software. So smart and high-tech is the new JavaScript tool ExtTLD that it doesn't allow computer users involved in the manufacture or marketing of products made with or tested on animals—from meat, dairy, and eggs to pharmaceuticals and GMOs containing animal DNA—to use it. The list of verboten users extends to those involved with circuses and other forms of "entertainment" that use animals, "sports" like hunting and rodeo, and service sectors such as the mass-transport of animals. Software engineer Jaro Benc designed ExtTLD for conscientious webmasters with a strong sense of ethics regarding the treatment of animals who use the open source Ext JS framework. In techspeak, the program functions as "a library for Java web developers that generates Ext JS Javascript at the runtime based on a JSP tag library." If you actually understood that last sentence, then you may want to get yourself a license for the software. *exttld.com*



## Electing Animals

■ Inspired by the recent successes of citizen-initiated animal-protection propositions in several states banning some of the cruelest factory farming practices, the Animals and Society Institute (ASI), an independent research organization and think tank, has proposed a plan to promote the interests of non-human species in the political arena. Its Animals' Platform is designed as a blueprint that activists can use to promote new and improved legislation for any and all animals at the local, state, and national levels. According to ASI, "Animal protection is more than a matter of personal conviction and lifestyle choice—it is also a public policy issue," but it takes direct citizen action to make sure politicians take the animals' interests seriously. Activists who want to help animals by actively engaging in the democratic process of making laws can visit ASI's website to download the Animals' Platform or order a free CD. *animalsandsociety.org*



## The Prince & the Pâté

■ In February, Prince Charles, heir to the throne of England, issued a foie-gras ban from the royal table on the grounds that force-feeding ducks and geese to swell their livers is inhumane. His Highness decreed that palace chefs were no longer to serve the diseased-organ “delicacy,” and may revoke the royal warrant from one of his favorite shops, the House of Cheese in Gloucestershire, for continuing to sell it. The UK is one of more than a dozen countries where foie gras production is illegal, yet still sold in stores. Animal advocates were thrilled that Charles has taken such a bold stance against cruelty to waterfowl. Justin Kerswell of Britain-based organization Vegetarians International Voice for Animals (VIVA!) says, “Foie gras is seen as very posh and the heir to the throne is probably the poshest person in Britain, so for him to ban it is very good news.”

*The Daily Mail* **VN**

**Mat Thomas** is a staff writer for *In Defense of Animals* and freelance writer based in San Francisco. Read more of his writing at his website, [animalrighter.org](http://animalrighter.org).

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