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Self-Proclaimed Expert Peddles Fear, Not Facts With Processed Meat Warning Gold Standard National Toxicology Program Study Shows Nitrite Use in Cured Meats Safe

Washington, D.C., April 21, 2005 -- American Meat Institute Foundation President James H. Hodges Issued the Following Warning to Consumers About Sodium Nitrite Misinformation Released Today:

"It appears that a misguided, self-proclaimed expert is on the loose today on the internet, creating alarm about sodium nitrite in an effort to sell his \$79 health guide. Mike Adams, who describes himself as a 'self-taught expert in food toxicology and holistic nutrition' has issued a statement riddled with inaccuracies.

About Processed Meats

Processed meats are safe and wholesome foods that can be part of a healthy, balanced diet. A paper from the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii that has not been peer reviewed and that was presented as a "poster" at a conference this week stands in sharp contrast to one released April 4 by the Harvard School of Public Health. That study, published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, reached the opposition conclusion: meat consumption was found NOT to increase the risk of pancreatic cancer.

Likewise, a 2004 paper published by Canadian cancer researchers and published in the International Journal of Cancer found no significant correlation between the "western" higher meat consumption diet and pancreatic cancer.

Unfortunately, this week's study is being reported in isolation from other peer-reviewed, published papers that conclude that higher meat consumption is not correlated with pancreatic cancer.

About Sodium Nitrite Safety

Adams alleges that sodium nitrite is unsafe when its safety – and indeed its health benefits – are well-documented:

- More than 93 percent of human nitrite intake comes from vegetables and saliva. Vegetables, particularly root vegetables, contain nitrate, which is converted to nitrite when it comes into contact with human saliva.
- Nitrite is used in cured meats to prevent the very real threat of botulism. Since nitrite has been used routinely in U.S.-made cured meats, no case of botulism one of the deadliest diseases has ever been associated with cured meats.

- A large body of research has shown that nitrite is made by the body as part of its healthy nitrogen cycle. Numerous papers have shown that nitrite plays a key role in regulating blood pressure, promoting wound healing and preventing pre-eclampsia during pregnancy. A new study slated for publication in May has also found that nitrite may be a good treatment for protecting and preserving tissues after heart attack, surgery and organ transplants.
- The U.S. National Toxicology Program the 'gold standard' group for evaluating whether substances cause cancer concluded in 2000 after a multi-year bioassay in which laboratory animals were fed sodium nitrite that it did not cause cancer, even at levels that far exceed those permitted in cured meats. In fact, there was some evidence that nitrite actually prevented some types of cancer. NTP's findings laid to rest concerns about nitrite safety that lingered from earlier, inconclusive research done in the 1970s and 1980s precisely the research that Adams quoted.

Far from being feared, sodium nitrite should be valued for its many important public health benefits. Adams clearly stands to benefit by creating unwarranted alarm about processed meats as he seeks to increase sales of his unscientific health advice.

Consumers who want credible accurate information should visit www.meatsafety.org or visit www.medem.com, published in part by the American Medical Association, and search 'cured meat safety.'