



For Immediate Release

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American Meat Institute Says Court Should Dismiss Vegetarian Group's Nuisance Lawsuit Against Hot Dogs

Washington, DC, July 22, 2009 - The American Meat Institute (AMI) today urged dismissal of a nuisance lawsuit filed through the pro-vegetarian, animal rights group, the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and its 'Cancer Project.'

"We hope the court will move quickly to review the science affirming the safety of hot dogs and processed meats and dismiss this lawsuit, recognizing it for the nuisance that it is," said AMI President J. Patrick Boyle. "Meat products are regulated and inspected by USDA and bear the federal government's seal of inspection, showing they are wholesome and nutritious. While PCRM argues for warning labels on our safe products, the labels would be more appropriately placed on PCRM's web sites and press releases to alert consumers to their true agenda."

Boyle said that the U.S. Dietary Guidelines affirm that processed meat and poultry products - including hot dogs -- can be a healthy part of a balanced diet. They are also among America's most popular and beloved foods.

PCRM has been widely criticized for its alarmist campaign against hot dogs and processed meats. Ron Kleinman, M.D., a leading medical expert on childhood nutrition at Massachusetts General Hospital and former chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics, has called PCRM's ad featuring child actors claiming they have cancer from processed meats 'outrageous,' and he chastised the group for exploiting children to achieve its political agenda.

AMI provided the following facts to help the media think critically about the absence of any scientific underpinnings for PCRM's legal strategy:

Fact: PCRM's goal is to create a vegan society. PCRM bases its claims against processed meats on this longstanding and myopic view that vegan diets (extreme diets that include no animal products whatsoever) are better than balanced diets. PCRM also cites a controversial and inconclusive report by the World Cancer Research Fund as representing "consensus" when it has been widely challenged by scientists.

Fact: PCRM's Executive Director Neal Barnard until 2005 sat on the board of the Foundation to Support Animal Protection, which has since become known as PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) Foundation. Need we say more?

Fact: There are safe levels of just about everything; balance and moderation are key. Even botulism toxin, a very dangerous substance at certain levels, is approved to

treat muscle spasms in people and to reduce skin wrinkling. Saying that there are "no safe levels" of a nutritious food product is simply outrageous and scientifically insupportable. Processed meats do play an important role in a balanced diet that includes fruits, vegetables, grains and dairy products.

Fact: Processed meats come in a variety of different formulations to meet many nutrition needs. Some choices include low fat, fat free or regular processed meats; processed meats made from beef, pork or poultry; and low-salt, cured and uncured processed meats. Yet PCRM takes a broad swipe at an entire and very diverse category of products. That's as stereotypical as saying that all vegetarian diets are healthy when a diet of potato chips, beer and lollipops - technically speaking - is a vegan diet.

Fact: Vegans Derive Far More Nitrite From Their Vegetable Consumption Than Meat Eaters Derive From Cured Meats. A liter of pomegranate juice contributes 100 times more nitrite to the diet than a hot dog and a spinach salad and a ham sandwich contribute about the same amount, according to one of the nation's leading experts on nitrite and nitrate. In fact, less than five percent of human nitrite intake comes from cured meats. Ninety-three percent is contributed by vegetables and by saliva. Will PCRM recommend that people stop eating vegetables or swallowing saliva? We hope not, because leading experts doing cutting edge research at the National Institutes of Health have found that nitrite is not just safe, it can be an important treatment for sickle cell anemia, heart attacks, brain aneurysms, even an illness that suffocates babies. 'The idea it's bad for you has not played out,' NIH Researcher Mark Gladwin, M.D., has said publicly.

Likewise, Nathan Bryan, Ph.D., of the University of Texas-Houston Institute of Molecular Medicine, another nitrite expert, told Food Quality magazine, 'Many studies implicating nitrite and nitrate in cancer are based on very weak epidemiological data. If nitrite and nitrate were harmful to us, then we would not be advised to eat green leafy vegetables or swallow our own saliva, which is enriched in nitrate.'

Fact: The WCRF/AICR report that PCRM cites made selective use of science. The WCRF review has been viewed with skepticism by respected scientists. The report is simply an analysis of existing epidemiological studies. For each study cited by WCRF showing a relationship between meat and cancer, there are many others (disregarded by WCRF) that show no relationship. In July 2008, the prestigious Journal of the National Cancer Institute published an article by a team of world-renowned cancer researchers who cautioned the epidemiological research community about the limitations of epidemiology and suggested that "...false positive results are a common problem in cancer and other types of epidemiological studies."

In addition, researchers from International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in a paper published in the Annals of Oncology, (v. 19, October 2008) said, "The substantial review of the evidence in the WCRF report demonstrates that there is no discernible association between many forms of cancer and specific dietary practices. There are still some very interesting hypotheses to pursue, such as the value of an approach on the basis of the food patterns rather than individual foods and nutrients, but the cupboard is remarkably bare... In view of the fragile grounds on which the conclusions of WCRF report on diet and cancer are based on, the information to the media should have been more cautious." The bottom line: The literature simply does not support the recommendations of the WCRF report and, in turn, PCRM's outrageous claims.

Fact: Cancer rates broadly and colon cancer rates specifically are declining, despite claims by PCRM that they are increasing. Colorectal cancer rates have been declining for most of the last two decades, according to the American Cancer Society, and so have colon cancer mortality rates.

"Just as consumers need to eat a healthy, balanced diet, they need balanced information. Check with credible health sources like your doctor, dietician or the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. You can be assured that they will tell you that a healthy diet can include processed meats," Boyle said.

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