

What's the fuss about giving

WINSTED

THE FEDERAL Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the sale and use of Prosilac, a synthetic growth hormone that stimulates and increases milk production in cows.

The use of this synthetic growth hormone has raised many issues, from health concerns (it has never been tested on humans) to the environmental impact. A study by Consumers Union, the publisher of Consumer Reports, calls the use of synthetic growth hormone into serious question.

The report states that people are very concerned and will not buy milk produced with synthetic growth hormone, even if they have to switch brands or pay more, and that they want package labeling to let them know the synthetic growth hormone is being used.

The chemical industry wants you to believe that the synthetic growth hormone is the same as the natural growth hormone in cows, but it is not. The synthetic growth hormone is produced by

genetically engineering bacteria which makes the cow produce more milk for a longer period of time than its natural hormone cycle.

An overlooked aspect of the debate is the economics of increased milk production for the farmers and for consumers-taxpayers. There continues to be a national milk surplus that drives down market prices, involves the federal government (taxpayers) in purchasing the surplus and shifts the cost burden to the small farmer who often ends up making less than it costs to produce the dairy product.

The Federal Dairy Price Support Program spends millions of taxpayer dollars each year to buy up the surplus of milk and dairy products for which dairy farmers can find no other market. The glut of milk from 1980-1985 led Congress to enact a voluntary dairy-herd termination program. The government paid dairy farmers to slaughter their dairy cows and agree to refrain from dairy farming for at least five