

## Statement on animal cloning for food production

On 11 January 2008, EFSA published its draft Scientific Opinion “on food safety, animal health and welfare and environmental impact of animals derived from cloning by somatic cell nucleus transfer (SCNT) and their offspring and products obtained from those animals”<sup>1</sup>. EFSA concludes that “the health and welfare of a significant proportion of clones has been found to be adversely affected”. However, Eurogroup for Animals considers that several other important health and welfare aspects have not been considered in the Opinion and conclusions.

In the context of the public consultation on the draft EFSA Scientific Opinion – which runs until 25 February 2008 – and in anticipation of the European Group of Ethics report on the ethical aspects of cloning, **it is Eurogroup’s view that:**

1. It is totally **unacceptable to clone animals for food production**. The cloning process is inefficient, wastes animals' lives and has a huge potential to cause animals unnecessary pain, suffering and distress (FAWC, 1998, Pew Initiative, 2002). According to the EFSA Draft Opinion, 95% of transferred embryo clones do not survive.
2. Livestock animals are already viewed by some as mere commodities rather than **sentient beings**, and it is highly likely that the cloning of any animal for food production purposes will compound this view.
3. Cloning will result in greater standardisation of the animals and increase the potential for them to be seen as **identical units rather than individuals**. This together with increased standardisation of husbandry systems could result in less human interaction with individual animals giving rise to insufficient understanding of and concern for the animals' welfare.
4. The use of cloning for food production purposes would **significantly reduce the genetic diversity** within livestock populations (Banner Committee Report, 1995; FAWC, 1998). This increases the chance of problems such as whole herds or populations of animals being wiped out by a disease or infection to which they are susceptible (FAWC, 1998).
5. The application of cloning technology is **progressing at a rate that far outstrips public debate** of the animal welfare and ethical considerations (Pew Initiative, 2005). If the sale of products from cloned animals does go ahead, it is absolutely essential that products are clearly labeled so that consumers are aware of the method of food production and can make an informed choice when buying meat and milk.

**Therefore, Eurogroup for Animals calls on the EU to set up a moratorium on cloning and the marketing of food from cloned animals.**

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa\\_locale-1178620753812\\_1178676922939.htm](http://www.efsa.europa.eu/EFSA/efsa_locale-1178620753812_1178676922939.htm)

## References

- **Banner Committee Report (1995)** Report of the Committee to consider the ethical implications of emerging technologies in the breeding of farm animals. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, HMSO London.
  - **Pew Initiative (2002)** Biotech in the Barnyard: Implications of Genetically Engineered Animals.  
<http://pewagbiotech.org/research/proceedings/>
  - **Pew Initiative (2005)** Exploring the Moral and Ethical Aspects of Genetically Engineered and Cloned Animals.  
<http://pewagbiotech.org/research/proceedings/>
  - **FAWC (1998)** Report on the Implications of Cloning for the Welfare of Farmed Livestock. Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, HMSO London.
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**Eurogroup for Animals** is the federation of EU Animal Welfare organisations. It represents EU public opinion through its membership organisations across the Union and has both the scientific and technical expertise to provide authoritative advice on biotechnology issues relating to animal welfare.