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Yummy, Cloned Beef and Scare-Story Sauce

By Dominic Lawson

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Anyone for cloned beef? Rib-eye would be my preferred cut; but that's because it's my usual choice at the local butcher's. Why should a cloned version taste any less delicious or be any less nutritious? In reality, that is not going to be a choice available to the general public. The Food Standards Agency won't authorise it.

This puzzles Professor Grahame Bulfield, former director of the Roslin Institute, where Dolly the sheep was cloned back in 1996. As he pointed out last week: "The FSA cannot produce any evidence that meat from clones or their offspring ... is any different to other meat. There is none, because it must be exactly the same."

Precisely so: the cloned animal is genetically identical to the one from which it has been cloned. It is, in fact, the precise opposite of a mutation and an extension of the idea behind artificial insemination, which consumers seem happy to accept.

The FSA's decision is not based on science, or even morality, but politics. It knows the majority of the public is spooked by the idea of anything remotely to do with animal clones in the food chain and that is that. There is not the same public terror of clone-derived foods outside the animal world and thus the FSA does not ban the sale of bananas.

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