

A Hormone Free Thanksgiving Meal?

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We hear a lot of talk about hormones and food and usually the discussion centers around meat. This causes many people to become concerned about the safety of the food they eat. Will your Thanksgiving meal or any other meal for that matter, be hormone free? The short answer to that question is no. It is impossible to have a hormone free meal, because both plants and animals produce hormones as a natural part of growth and development.

When looking at promotional statements for some turkeys, for example, they will read something like this, "Our turkeys are raised without the use of hormones". Did you know that all turkeys (including Butterball, etc.) and chickens are raised without the use of supplemental hormones? It is prohibited. However, to say a turkey was raised without hormones is somewhat of a contradiction since the turkey produces its own hormones. As stated earlier, even plants produce hormones but that doesn't mean plants are dangerous either, just that it is part of living things.

People often criticize the beef industry because of implant use as if something sinister is involved. The products used have been tested rigorously and clearly pose no threat to human health. If you compare the beef we eat to the plant products we eat it is surprising to most how the hormone levels compare. For example, one ounce of cabbage has 1,061 times more estrogenic activity than one ounce of beef from an implanted steer. If you compare the estrogenic activity of other common foods you find that defatted soy flour has 755 million ng/500grams, tofu has 113.5 million ng/500grams, beef from an implanted steer has only seven (7) ng/500 grams, and beef from a non-implanted steer has only five (5) ng/500 grams.

Have these plants been altered in some way to cause these high levels? The answer again is no. It is simply a natural part of life. Does it mean that cabbage and other plants are unsafe? Absolutely not! In fact, coleslaw on a hotdog is a favorite of many, especially if it is an all-beef hotdog.

We have a wonderful food system in this country and the technology has helped provide a safe wholesome food supply that is more economical than any other country in the world. This system also makes good nutrition more affordable to the poor, a luxury many countries only wish for. It seems we should worry less and be more thankful for the abundance we are privileged to have.