

Alderwood: An Exploration on Manipulation and Gentrification

Introduction:

Year 2003:

There has been a growing concern towards the livelihood and community integrity among the Alderwood residents. Some suspected that their neighborhood has been a victim of a larger scheme that is the result of local council's inaction and governmental corruption. In an effort to figure out the underlying issues, we, the investigators, have gathered several sources of information and compiled this report. In the following sections, we will subsequently lay out our hypothesis, outline our investigation process, identify potential issues, provide evidence, and draw conclusions. We hope that this report will expose the underlying problems that have plagued Alderwood and provide direction for future investigations.

Background/Context:

Historically, Alderwood has been an energetic and popular town located in Washington state. The neighborhood is mainly supported by tourism and the beef and dairy cattle industry. Unfortunately, the town has been heavily impacted by the economic recession following the collapse of the tech industry and the recent discovery of "mad cow disease". In an effort to save the floundering economy, the Alderwood residents are looking forward to welcoming some long-expected changes. In particular, they are hoping that a new private laboratory facility specializing in agri-business would help them attract talents and resuscitate the local business.

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Our preliminary search through the evidence has allowed us to identify **four** main stakeholders: the new laboratory, residents of Alderwood, state government, and local city council. We were struck by the local council's irresponsible attitude toward residents' concerns. By observation, the city council tends to either deny the issues, go with a lesser popular option or make false promises.

Hypothesis:

Given Alderwood's political affiliation as mainly Republican, there appears to be an economy/financial-focused outlook. With the struggling livestock economy, it has become increasingly important to the people to save their businesses and community. This has given rise to the current City Council that is discussed throughout the paper. We suspect that the state government has colluded with the people in the local council in an attempt to secure political power and wealth. With its agenda, the state government potentially made secret deals with the biotech companies (particularly the Boynton Lab) that they are hoping to bring into Alderwood in an attempt to salvage the falling economy with disregard to the public's wants.

Methodology:

While approaching the situation of Alderwood with the available data, we emphasized the importance of context. It was imperative to us to understand what the general activity of the town was like during any significant events. Additionally, the articles were used to understand what perspectives were involved in terms of issues and possible conflicts that may have arisen between the people, local government, state government, and others. However, with the limited time we had for analysis, we focused on keywords to get a better understanding of the town for the issues we were looking into. Words, such as government, council, cows/bovines, etc., were used to narrow down our search as well as analysis of what words were most frequently used/mentioned among the articles. The general characteristics of the population were also taken into account, specifically in terms of political party, to help better understand the local government and the people's needs/demands.

Any important events or views from either the council or the people were taken note of in order to help establish what the general opinion may be for important topics. All issues that often came up were discussed in terms of whether there may be backdoor dealings that may influence the local economy. However, it is important to note that the analysis we did was limited by the time and resources we had, making it very possible that we have missed an important point/article that may have been essential to our report. Despite our limitations, we attempted to piece together the scenario we believe to be true in terms of the political climate in Alderwood.

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Issues:

While investigating Alderwood, we came across multiple recurring issues. During this timeframe, the community was grappling with the recent discovery of mad cow disease among its livestock. There was also a lack of funding for public works, education, and water resources, among other important issues over the last 2–3 years. The changing economy and political climate served to exacerbate these problems. We believed that the following issues were the most prevalent in the community and provided important perspectives that may help explain as to what the possible backroom political dealings may be.

Mad Cow Disease:

One of the most well-reported issues in Alderwood centers around the neurodegenerative disease of cattle: bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), otherwise known as mad cow disease. News broke through that 10 infected Holstein cows were imported from Canada to the Lower Valley (the region which Alderwood is a part of), leading to the slaughter of one on Dec. 9, 2001. On Dec. 23, the first positive case of mad cow disease was reported in the U.S., stemming from the investigation of the slaughtered cow. Following this discovery, 450 bull calves were slaughtered at the Alderwood bull calf operation on Jan. 6, 2002, for being linked to the positive case, and the facilities with the remaining nine imported cows were quarantined.

In order to counteract consumer fears and prevent the decline of the local beef and dairy industry, the Lower Valley residents quickly banded together to support the farmers affected and eliminate misinformation regarding mad cow disease by holding an “Eat Beef” rally

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on Jan 12. This event achieved widespread support, with approximately 2,500 attending the free BBQ rally.

Some dissent came from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, where spokesperson Garnet Zimmerman pushed for a ban on milk products to force further investigation on whether cows could pass on the disease to humans. Teamsters Vice President and Director Fred Gegare also supported this notion, indicating the potential relation between prions — “the proteins that cause BSE” (1101243469311.txt) — and white blood cells, which are found in milk. Rae Klein, the spokesperson for WestFarm Foods, spoke against this ban, stating that Teamsters’ dissent stemmed from the then-ongoing labor dispute between the two groups and that they were using BSE as a tactic to scare consumers. This is the first mention of prions in local news reports, which becomes important later.

The USDA continued their investigation into the positive BSE case, ordering on Jan. 12 the slaughter of an additional 129 cows from the Lower Valley traced to the initial import herd. 119 of the 129 cows were successfully euthanized, and 28 tests were completed and came back negative. Further tracing was continued, and legislation permanently banning downed animals from entering the food supply was passed. This investigation was completed on Feb. 10, totaling over 700 slaughtered livestock.

As more and more cows were euthanized, the livestock industry in Alderwood began to decline, leading to a financial drought for the primarily-rural community. On Feb. 2, Alderwood Mayor Rex Luthor announced the construction of a biotechnology laboratory under the claim of “increas[ing] economic prosperity” (1101243338500.txt). The Washen Foundation invested \$1 million to start up “Boynton Laboratories”, named after Dr. Philip Boynton, the biologist heading

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the project. A further \$525,000 was invested for the lab to study BSE, with \$225,000 coming from the state's then-new biotechnology initiative and the remainder from the Washington State Legislature. On May 5, 200 people attended the opening event for the \$25 million Boynton Laboratories facility — a much lower attendance than the “Eat Beef” rally held just months before.

Although the investigation into the first positive Holstein in the U.S. was thought to be complete, new leads reported on Dec. 12 suggested a discrepancy between the records that the USDA received, the records from the herd owner, and the Canadian records on the Holstein. The manager of the farm indicated that the cow was due to give birth to a new calf soon, matching the Canadian records of the Holstein being 6-1/2 years old and contradicting the herd owner's claims of it being 3 to 4 years old. As a result, around 4,000 livestock were at risk of being slaughtered, and it is unknown as to what happened to them. On Jan. 13, 2003, Governor Gary Locke voiced his support for the livestock industry as Lower Valley residents pushed for the removal of cattle export bans and for increased testing speed. These discrepancies suggest some manipulation happening on a local government level, as the only item seemingly out of place is the herd owner's reports.

Reports on the matter died down until Sept. 9, when it was announced that Boynton Laboratories was authorized by the USDA to conduct national tests for mad cow disease. On Dec. 31, the USDA implemented new slaughterhouse regulations to prevent products of BSE-positive cows from entering the markets. These regulations were accompanied by the arrival of rapid testing, of which samples would be tested at Boynton Laboratories to find positive cases and hold carcasses for further testing. Both the regulations and rapid testing

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would continue on in the testing program that the USDA announced on Oct. 21, 2004, potentially impacting the Lower Valley livestock industry negatively.

Shortly after being given authorization by the USDA, scientists at Boynton Laboratories were able to replicate a neurological disorder in mice similar to BSE through the development of a synthetic prion protein reported on Jan. 20, 2004. By March 3, Boynton Lab spokesperson Laurel Sulfate announced that a team of biophysicists developed a treatment for BSE and other related diseases. This team was headed by Dr. Boynton and included Drs. Von Ryker and Sanderson. Mayor Rex Luthor then expressed his support for the research done by the Boynton team, emphasizing the importance of their work in developing Alderwood. Around the same time, residents of Alderwood shared their thoughts on the BSE crisis, stressing the financial instability that it has caused to not only the Lower Valley beef and dairy industries, but to the community as a whole. The news reports on the matter end on this seemingly bittersweet note as the Alderwood residents are struck by economic hardship while this state- and locally-backed laboratory receives extreme funding and praise.

According to the scientific reports, Dr. Von Ryker, an expert in mad cow disease, had violated bioethics by faking landmark papers and deliberately infecting over 100 bovines with questionable goals. As a consequence, his research institute was closed on Sept. 15, 2001. However, when we searched his name in the news articles, we found out he was the chief scientist of the Boynton Lab, which was open on Feb. 2, 2002 in Alderwood. Compared to other underfunded U.S. research programs on prion disease, the Boynton Lab received millions of fundings from private investments and the state to conduct research. The Boynton Lab was also selected as a site for national testing on cattle. Mayor Rex Luthor fully supported the lab and

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hoped it could revive the local economy in Alderwood. Interestingly, on April 16, 2004, the FDA began to investigate the lab without explicit reasons. On April 30, 2004, the mayoral democratic candidate John Torch was found to be with Laurel Sulfate, the spokeswoman of Boynton Lab. Future investigations are needed to examine whether Dr. Von Ryker committed any violation of ethics in Alderwood; whether the lab and the government had political dealings; what the relationship between Laurel Sulfate and politicians in Alderwood is; and why the FDA began to investigate the lab only to suddenly stop.

Public Works and Education:

During the past few years, Alderwood's funding has been focused on stimulating the local economy and therefore had reduced public works and education funding throughout the years. In April 2002, the Alderwood school board decided on the uses of the I-728 initiative that passed with flying approval rates in the state in 2000 to provide additional funding to help students reach new academic standards. The money would be used for reducing class sizes, professional development of staff, and after-school programs in Alderwood with increasing amounts per student each year. Even so, there was a chance of receiving less funding depending on budgets during the following years. In 2002, the council had also finalized the decision of a new community center which was planned for decades.

In 2002, Assistant Principal Zavala was making a case to implement a preschool program due to the high levels of literacy problems and poverty among children having a different first language and lowered rates of pre-school attendance in Alderwood. In 2004, the community had to find a way to cut the child care and pre-school budget even shorter and find ways to be able to keep the child care center open.

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In 2003, the Lower Alderwood County Rural Enterprise Community (REC) decided to take the remaining budget and redistribute it to different entities. This led to Alderwood to come out empty-handed, taking back the funding for the SunnyView Park parking meters, the Skatepark and Councilwoman Jennie Angel's outreach programs under the explanation that Alderwood was represented by the projects in Grandview and that the investment for the wine education center would stimulate more of the economy and have a better impact rather than dividing it equally. Later in 2004, to make up for the 2005 budget deficit of \$393,910, the City Manager proposed eliminating the Park and Recreation Director Position held by Don Stiles. This led to all his responsibilities being divided between two other departments who already could barely handle their workload. In 2004, a hefty increase to property taxes was passed in Alderwood to avoid further reductions of funding in city services.

The state legislation passed an authorization for 15 new charter schools over the first three years and 45 over the next six. The residents of Alderwood feared that these institutions with lower regulations would allow administrators to cut corners to save on costs, which has already been happening in Alderwood, and has a higher chance of bringing a worse quality of education than that in public school. Although the opening of public charter schools may aid the teachers' concerns for large classroom sizes, there was no change to the public school budget that allowed for the raise they demanded and were promised by the Senator. The money given to charter schools for each student would be funds given otherwise to the public schools, which are already impoverished and may have trouble covering large static costs from running a school without their normal amount of students, making their situation worse.

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In 2004, there was limited funding from the state for initiatives I-728 and 732. Because of this, legislature SB 6311 allowed districts to set their levy base using the amount they would have collected if the initiatives were funded. Throughout Alderwoods newspaper, there are multiple advertisements and opinion pieces from the community to vote YES on the levy, which they may not ask for the full levy due to their small, impoverished district. This legislature made the residents of Alderwood raise the funds for their children's educational funding that was already voted for. There is also mention of cutting the education budget by 7% last year and not reinstating it.

Water Services:

Along with the privatization of public services and education, it has been noted that the water services of Alderwood were in the talks of becoming privatized as well. It was discussed in several articles that there were many issues with the water systems in Alderwood. The issues of suffering from a decrease in water pressure during the summer, a much older water system, and wastewater leaks remained prevalent throughout the years. With these problems, discussions of other companies coming in to manage the water services (leading to its privatization) was brought up with some opposition. While privatization would lighten the load on the City Council and city administration that manage the water, it puts pressure on citizens. There is a risk of increasing water prices and slower service responses, which will only hinder the public. The instability of the water resource already proves to be a strong disadvantage to a community that heavily relies on a cattle and agricultural economy, which puts this business at risk. Additionally, it proves to be incredibly disadvantageous to low-income families who are going to have to deal

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with increasing prices on a basic service. It may lead to both families being pushed out of Alderwood and dismantling the agricultural and cattle based economy in Alderwood, making way for an unwanted high-tech economy.

Housing Rehabilitation:

Along with the many other issues mentioned above, housing has remained a prevalent discussion point in Alderwood. With many families in the area being mid- to low-income, affordable housing for all has become a pressing issue. While there have been plans discussed for developing more housing for the community, there has been conflict between the public and the council. There have been instances of people attempting to present, but being denied the ability to present in front of the council. Additionally, when another group presented to the Planning Commission about their request to have housing units built on their property and after much talk of the committee liking the alternative plans, the commission still voted against changing their plans for housing.

Around this time, the council was able to come into agreement with the Monson family to sell their feedlot; however, it is not stated what kind of development the 150-acre lot will have. Additionally, there are increasing concerns in this area, possibly driving up living/home costs in Alderwood, driving out families that are already struggling economically. This empty lot holds the potential to bring in the high-tech companies that the town's citizens do not want or the area being developed for the sole purpose of increasing the wealth of a select few rather than boosting the overall local economy. The need for housing and the open unknown lots holds the potential to lead to gentrification in which current residents may be displaced by the potential high-paying biotech jobs from the incoming company.

Data Visualizations:

Since we have a large amount of text data and it is unrealistic to read through every one of them, we extracted and visualized the most frequent two-word phrases to explore common themes in the text. Following the steps in [Text Mining with R](#), we tokenized all text into bigrams, removed stop words, filtered out numbers, and arranged the phrases based on frequency. The word cloud below visualizes phrases that occur more than 50 times; the larger the phrase, the more frequent it shows up in the text. This visualization helps us to pinpoint the most popular topics featured in the new articles. For example, the word cloud shows the heated discussions on schools and education in Alderwood, and the city council seems to be a stakeholder involved in various issues across all news articles.

Also, the word cloud is useful to identify information that appears very often in press, but does not provide relevant information for our purpose in terms of investigating the current political and economic changes in Alderwood. For instance, “weekly lucky”, “wise words”, and “albert smith” are among the top 20 most frequent bigrams in the text. When we looked up those phrases in the text, we found out there was a weekly reveal of lottery lucky numbers along with a sentence called “wise words of weekly wisdom” in Alderwood news, and all these stories were written by Albert Smith. So whenever we encounter articles about weekly lucky numbers, we could confidently ignore them to save our time. Similarly, “john panni”, “ellie olmsen”, “jamie smart”, and “melissa browning” are reporters and are unlikely to be actively involved in any important activities. Locations such as “yakima valley” and “mabton school” that are not in the city of Alderwood also pop up very frequently. Those require further reading to decide on their relevance.

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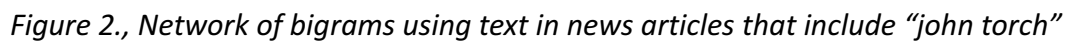
Figure 1 gives us a rough idea of the common themes in the news articles. We could identify document IDs that contain certain phrases, such as “cow disease”, “rex luthor” (the mayor), and so on, and then read the articles or extract common themes using text analysis to dig deeper into the scenario.

To identify potential stakeholders and their prioritized agendas, we made an initial attempt to filter news articles that contain “john torch”, the Democratic candidate, and examined the basic ideas of his political stance and people surrounding him based on the patterns of co-occurrence in the text. From Figure 2, we can see the text structure from the arrows and frequency of phrases from the gradient of black. For example, “alderwood city”, “city manager”, and “city council” are among the most frequent phrases in the text relevant to “john torch”. What’s more, based on the arrows, we could possibly assume councilman “jim sarducci”, “tom seeger”, and councilwoman “jennie angel” as being related to John Torch. The graph also points to some political issues on which John Torch may have opinions, including sales tax, property tax, housing rehabilitation, increase pay, and so on. While we are inconclusive about John Torch’s stance at this point, this strategy could be useful to identify areas he could be involved in and read further about it; it could be used to test other stakeholders’ networks as well.

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least 18 years to register for vote). However, since there wasn't any other information we could use to decide whether a voter was deceased or not, we kept everyone who registered to vote from 1935-2004. The following two graphs show the overall political party affiliation in Alderwood and party affiliation broken down by streets.

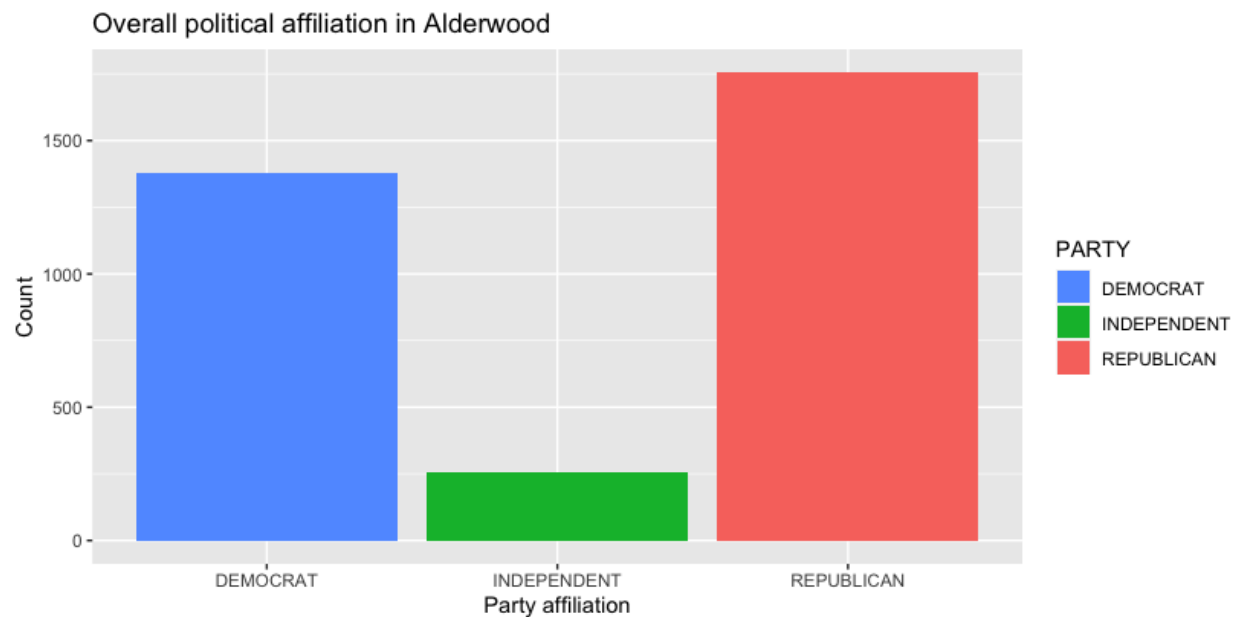


Figure 3. Overall political affiliation in Alderwood

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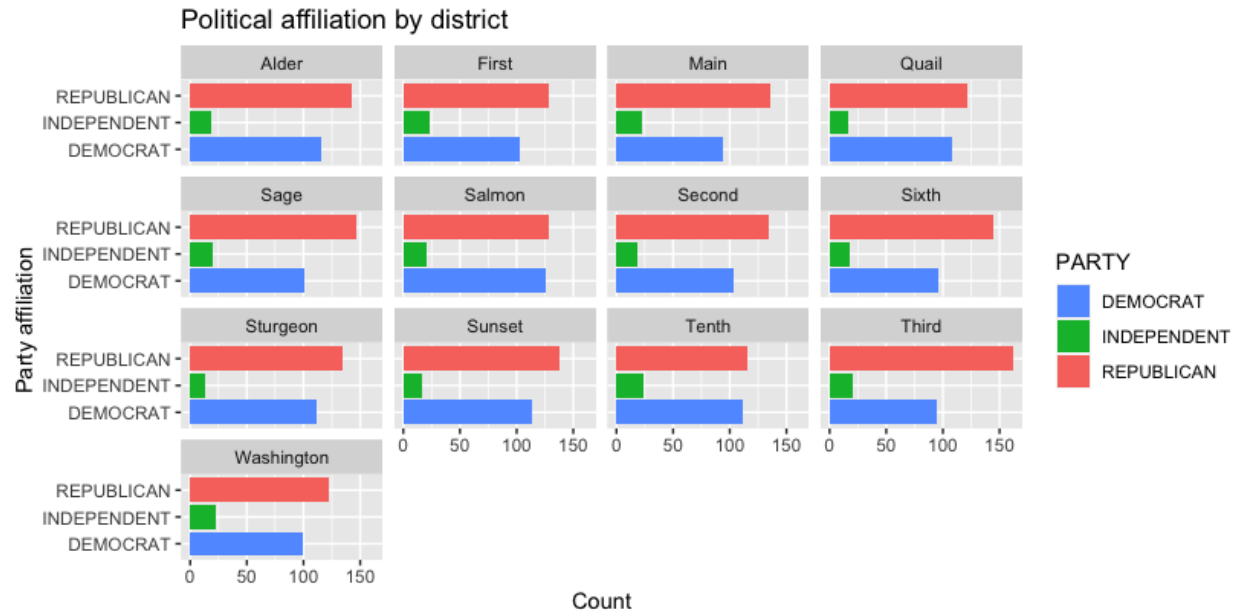


Figure 4. Political affiliation in Alderwood by street name

Conclusion:

With all the issues that were considered, we believe that there are backroom political dealings that are hurting the local economy and Alderwood neighborhood. While acknowledging that the community is generally lower- to mid-income, this puts the people at great risk when the economy suffers. However, this can pose to be an opportunity to those in power. The privatization of public sectors/services, selling of land that used to be for cattle/feedlots, and greatly limited education & low-income housing indicated that the people were no longer the priority to the City Council. We believe that the biotech company represents the beginning of the gentrification of Alderwood in which local people are often pushed out to make way for a new type of economy and for new wealthier citizens. Low-income areas are often targeted due to those in power/the government considering them less of a priority (less tax-paying power) and the potentially cheaper facilities for building a new company there. Public opinion can be easily ignored with the incentive of money, which has been a recurring theme throughout all the issues we have discussed.

Specifically looking further into the reported articles in Alderwood regarding mad cow disease, it's clear to see that the most influential elected officials have more of a focus on the potential of wealth and future economic growth than handling the failing economic situation at hand. Based on the articles presented, it appears that Mayor Rex Luthor, among other officials, is being supported by private sources and explicitly uphold the lab led by scientists with questionable ethics, allowing a two-way exchange of power and information to achieve their goals while keeping the residents unsupported and disregarding their needs. The people of Alderwood should continue to band together on issues that impact their community negatively

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and hold their elected officials accountable when they don't follow through with their stated intentions.

While we report our findings of suspicions on the government's inaction and potential political dealings, we acknowledge that many issues are inconclusive and require further evidence to evaluate our assumptions. In future investigations, it would be helpful to connect our exploration of text and registry data with phone logs to weave a strong narrative that contains a precise timeline and hard evidence on how the stakeholders conspired together.

Outside References:

1. Text Mining with R: A Tidy Approach. <https://www.tidytextmining.com/index.html>

Data References:

General Lack of Funding:

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2. 1101242941448.txt
3. 1101163109462.txt
4. 1101242586665.txt
5. 1101242519790.txt

Mad Cow Disease:

1. 1101243512780.txt
2. 1101243511796.txt
3. 1101243491280.txt
4. 1101243490046.txt
5. 1101243468811.txt
6. 1101243469077.txt
7. 1101243469311.txt
8. 1101243469546.txt

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9. 1101243467858.txt
10. 1101243468092.txt
11. 1101243444577.txt
12. 1101243424217.txt
13. 1101243381483.txt
14. 1101243381248.txt
15. 1101243380483.txt
16. 1101243379764.txt
17. 1101243338500.txt
18. 1101243337295.txt
19. 1101243336748.txt
20. 1101243314341.txt
21. 1101243250013.txt
22. 1101163356450.txt
23. 1101243534062.txt
24. 1101243533077.txt
25. 1101163905529.txt
26. 1101163852951.txt
27. 1101163729371.txt
28. 1101243161481.txt
29. 1101163018612.txt
30. 1101163556822.txt

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31. 1101243534343.txt

32. 1101243533827.txt

33. 1101243532358.txt

34. 1101243532593.txt

35. 1101243513015.txt

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44. Scientific Review 1.doc

45. Scientific Review 2.doc

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11. 1101163636667.txt
12. 1101162505139.txt
13. 1101162433811.txt
14. 1101242406742.txt
15. 1101163759934.txt

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1. 1101243401795.txt
2. 1101243030730.txt
3. 1101162507155.txt
4. 1101242498164.txt
5. 1101163109228.txt
6. 1101242743385.txt
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2. 1101242497211.txt
3. 1101242406976.txt
4. 1101242919120.txt
5. 1101163870045.txt