

**CAFOS NEG****CAFOS LEADS TO AN OUTBREAK OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE, WHICH WILL RAPIDLY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE GLOBALIZED MEAT INDUSTRY, SPURRING AN IMMEDIATE SHIFT TOWARDS VEGETARIANISM****Best 2k1**

[Dr. Steve, founder of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies (ICAS), the first scholarly center dedicated to the philosophical discussion on animal liberation "THE LOVE OF MONEY: Mountains of Misery: The Holocaust of Foot-and-Mouth Disease" <http://www.all-creatures.org/sof/money-fmd.html>]

Just as the United States is highly vulnerable to Mad Cow Disease, so too, like Britain, can the U.S. be ravaged by FMD, whether spread through infected feed, the shoes of European tourists, or the bologna bombs of "agro-terrorists." Should one farm in the U.S. be infected, the virus could easily migrate from California to Maine and become an international crisis of the first order.

It would take the combined forces of government agencies and the military to halt the spread of the virus throughout the nation's stock of 170 million cattle, pigs, and sheep. Authorities are on record stating that mass culling methods would be used as the primary means of controlling the disease, as they were in earlier outbreaks in the U.S. Still, many feel that the nation remains unprepared and that a FMD outbreak in the U.S. would be unmanageable. A trillion dollar a year agriculture industry hangs in the balance

After an onslaught of falling prices, swine fever, E.coli, salmonella, campylobacter, MCD, and FMD, British farmer Oliver Edwards laments: "Every way we turn, everything we do - it's all bad luck." Bad luck? More like the systemic and unavoidable consequences of an irrational intensive, globalized farming system premised upon an obscene destruction of life and the earth.

Combine the capitalist profit imperative, a factory farm system of agriculture, and a global marketplace bustling with human and animal traffic, global trade organizations and treaties, and you get a crisis situation where infectious diseases breed rapidly and spread throughout the entire planet. In the current global economy, an animal can be bred in Britain, fattened in France, slaughtered in Spain, and eaten in Ecuador. The pathways of disease, consequently, are difficult if not impossible to trace. Nor is there any guarantee that after hundreds of thousands of animals are massacred in the current crisis further outbreaks will not be lurking right around the corner. A Blessing in Disguise?

In a highly controversial move, Ingrid Newkirk, President of PETA, declared that she welcomed the spread of FMD through the U.S., as "it would wake up consumers." While initially shocking, her logic is hard to fault. First, billions of livestock are doomed to die no matter what, and a gunshot to the head is more humane than factory-farm confinement, long-distance shipping, and a slaughterhouse stun-gun that fails to render an animal unconscious as it is dismembered piece by piece. Second, the violence that goes on behind the scenes would be evident for all to see, such that slaughterhouses would indeed have glass walls. Third, FMD could cripple the U.S. livestock industry and might likely encourage farmers to adopt traditional farming techniques and inspire droves of people to turn to vegetarianism.

Indeed, in European countries such as Germany, which now boasts a Green Minister of Agriculture, there is a new emphasis on shifting toward organic farming. Moreover, throughout the world, many people are so traumatized by the images of bonfires of bodies, they are turning toward vegetarianism, as vegetarian groups in England and elsewhere are being bombarded with requests for information. A recent poll in the UK's The Sunday Times showed that 82% of people would prefer a return to more traditional, humane methods of farming, even if it meant paying more for their food. 12% stated that they have already given up meat in the face of recent disease outbreaks, and 26% said they would eat less meat or none at all. Kay Holden, spokesperson for UK's animal rights group, Animal Aid, said of the new crop of vegetarians: "It's different that it was during the mad cow epidemic where people became vegetarians out of fear for what could do to them. This time it's because of the conditions [of animals] they've seen on TV."

A Time of Reckoning But FMD is just an alibi for the many diseases that proliferate throughout the squalid and overcrowded cages and pens of the factory farms that breed afflictions in animals, require massive doses of antibiotics, and do exacerbate the current post-antibiotic crisis that nullifies once useful drugs.

While the necessity of slaughtering over a million animals that are actually or potentially infected with FMD is hotly debated, the undeniable fact remains that billions of animals are needlessly slaughtered to satisfy ignorant, gluttonous, and unhealthy cravings for flesh. The inexorable logic of profit and competition demands that animals be raised as cheaply as possible, under intensive confinement in mass quantities, using massive amounts of chemicals to minimize the spread of disease and maximize the size and weight of animals, employing concentrated economies of scale and long distance markets.

All this killing and trouble -- shooting, bulldozing, burning, dynamiting, surveillance, and disinfecting -- for the sake of consuming flesh. Aren't all consumers paying too dear a price for cheap meat? Clearly the only way out of the debacles of the global meat and dairy

industries is not to enact absurd stopgap, reformist measures like using thermometers to check for safe cooking temperatures, wiping feet in disinfectant trays, or testing animals for signs of disease before slaughter. Rather, society must banish the entire system of mechanized killing, and shift to a local, organic, plant-based food system.