

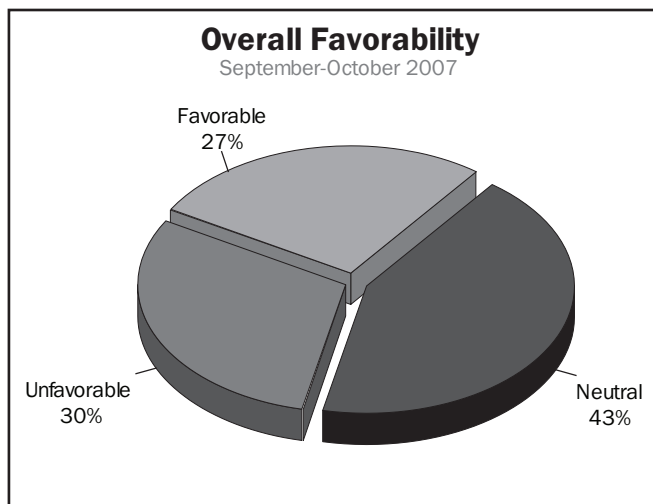
Beef industry media analysis

September/October 2007

The following Checkoff-funded report analyzes media coverage of beef and cattle industry issues through a special service called CARMA (Computer-Aided Research and Media Analysis). The Checkoff-funded issues management program commissions this analysis for tracking and responding to beef media coverage in the following areas: diet/health, environment, food safety, beef marketing, animal rights and economics.

The CARMA system rates media coverage favorability on a scale of zero to 100 based on criteria including headline, length, placement, number and quality of favorable and unfavorable sources and general tone of an article. In this rating system, articles that fall in the 45-55 range are considered neutral or balanced. In the reports on ratings, *favorable* means *favorable to the beef industry*.

Because a single article can address more than one issue, it may be analyzed as part of more than one issue area. Therefore, article volume and percentages across the issue areas will not add up.



Overview

- Total volume of coverage: 1,111 articles
- Average favorability rating: 50 or neutral
- Estimated impressions: 608 million
- Leading media outlet: *Associated Press* (192 articles)

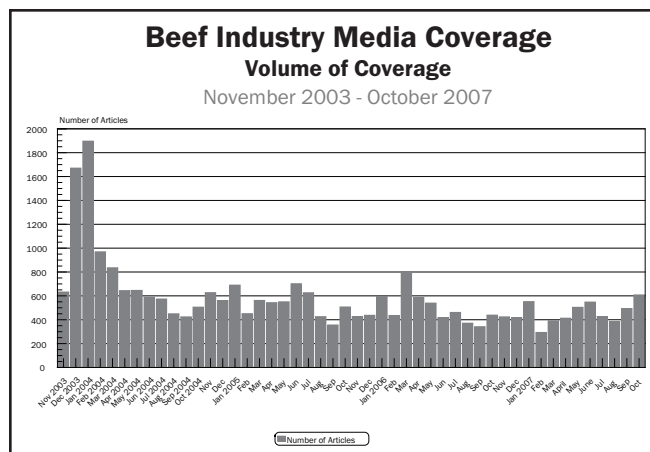
Media reporting on the beef industry during September and October increased 37 percent compared to last period, totaling 1,111 articles. The tone of this coverage decreased 4 points to average a neutral 50 rating.

For the September/October period, the volume of favorable coverage decreased 10 percentage points to represent 27 percent of overall coverage. Unfavorable coverage increased 13 percentage points while neutral coverage decreased 3 percentage points, representing 29 percent and 44 percent of overall reporting, respectively.

Beef safety emerged as the leading issue covered by the media, with reports increasing 65 percent this period. “Pathogens,” “recalls” and “foodborne illness and beef” were the three leading sub-issues. Media attention on these topics was driven by several beef recalls involving possible *E. coli* contamination; the Topps Meat Co. recall in October received the most coverage.

The volume of economics reporting increased 24 percent this period compared with July/August. Economics reporting was impacted by greater media attention on packer issues, including the various recalls by meat processors and the involvement of beef plants in South Korea’s decision to impose new restrictions on imports of U.S. beef. Separately, the media reported on United States and South Korean trade negotiations and a Nebraska state government trade mission to East Asia.

Reporting on beef marketing increased 53 percent this period. Attention to ground beef recalls accounted for much of this volume increase. Media outlets continue to report on beef recipes, providing numerous steak recipes as well as several recipes for fall comfort foods such as chilies and stews. Additionally, there were recipes surrounding the Rosh Hashanah holiday.



Reporting on nutrition/health issues increased 36 percent this period. Coverage was mostly comprised of vegetarian recipes and beef recipes containing nutrition information. Additional reporting was fueled by attention to a childhood obesity and iron deficiency study in which many articles offered suggestions for toddlers being given beef to reduce the risk of becoming obese. Separately, the release of the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) report on Oct. 31 began to generate media attention at the end of October.

Environmental coverage increased by 26 percent this period. Media reports often highlighted the relationship between cattle and wildlife populations. Additionally, there was greater attention on cattle production and global warming.

Key findings

- Several beef recalls due to possible *E. coli* contamination drew widespread media attention this period. The majority of this coverage was on the 21.7 million pound recall of ground beef from Topps Meat of Elizabeth, N.J., and focused on government inspection practices.
- Foreign trade was a prominent topic, including coverage of trade talks with South Korea and new restrictions on beef imports to Japan. Coverage of the South Korean negotiations often focused on that country's continuing refusal to fully open its market to U.S. beef.
- An art teacher in suburban Chicago was accused of inappropriately using his position to attempt to indoctrinate his students with his views about animal cruelty and veganism. Although reports highlighted his beliefs, his extreme stance worked to turn public opinion against him.
- The release of the WCRF report at the end of October received attention in numerous media outlets. Although coverage primarily focused on the impact of weight on the risk of developing certain types of cancers, high consumption of red meat was also highlighted. Processed meats were characterized as "even more dangerous" than red meat.

Beef safety

- **Volume:** 469 articles, 42 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 43 rating, or slightly unfavorable
- **Leading sub-issue:** Pathogens and beef – 231 articles
- **Leading media:** *Associated Press* – 100 articles

Beef safety emerged as the dominant issue in beef industry reporting this period, due largely to substantial media reporting on a number of beef recalls initiated over concerns of *E. coli* contamination. Topps Meat's frozen hamburger patty recall received a significant amount of coverage as the media reported on it being the nation's second largest beef recall. Additionally, reports noted that 30 people were believed to have become ill from the outbreak and inspectors found inadequate safety measures at Topps' New Jersey plant.

Coverage of the Topps recall, along with smaller recalls by Cargill, Interstate Meats and Blue Ribbon Meats, led to increased scrutiny of the meat industry and government regulators in the press, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) accused of failing to report the recall in a timely manner. The *New York Times* ran a significant, very unfavorable piece about USDA's missteps, which reported that the agency knew about the tainted meat weeks before the recall was announced. This report and others questioned the safety of the nation's meat supply.

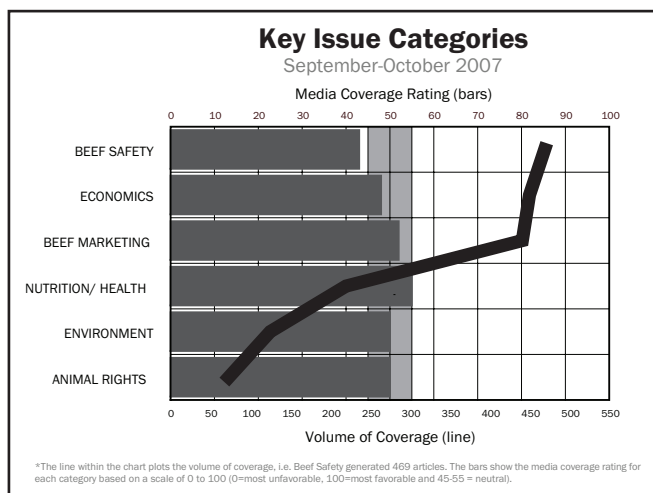
Dr. Richard Raymond, undersecretary of food safety at USDA, was quoted in the *Times* article noting that although the incidence of *E. coli* contamination in the nation's meat supply decreased in recent years, it suddenly spiked summer 2007. He said, "We had three really good years. Something happened over the summer" (Oct. 5). *USA Today* examined the spike in an Oct. 2 report which pointed out that the recall came after the meat industry had tightened its standards so successfully "that even critics held it up as a model of what the industry can do." While the report quoted the American Meat Institute's Randy Huffman as saying the outbreaks were random, attorney Bill Marler echoed Raymond's opinion, commenting, "Something has changed, and it has not changed for the better." Despite his critical comments, Raymond also spoke favorably about the industry, saying in an interview on CBS's "Early Show" that the U.S. food supply is "the safest in the world" and that the recall was an indication that the system was working (Oct. 1).

Media often noted that Topps' lax procedures had not been found and corrected by USDA in its regular inspections. In an extremely unfavorable segment of "Good Morning America," correspondent David Kerley of ABC News noted that USDA is at a loss to explain the "rash of *E. coli* problems over the summer" and reported, "Critics say that every lot of meat should be tested now" (Oct. 1). The "Good Morning America" broadcast was the most negative report in September/October, calling into question the safety of the nation's food supply and USDA oversight while highlighting the need for greater regulation of the industry.

By mid-October, coverage of the recalls shifted to proposed changes to USDA's oversight of the beef industry. Reports frequently noted that Congress and consumer groups have been criticizing the agency for some time. Much of the discussion in these reports focused on giving the agency recall powers and increasing inspections at larger plants with a history of problems. The coverage was somewhat doubtful of the ability of USDA to carry out the changes, but also unfavorable towards the industry, noting that "more supervision is needed to ensure compliance" from plants (*USA Today*, Oct. 24). A number of outlets also reported on USDA plant inspector complaints in the wake of the outbreaks that staffing vacancies in the agency have threatened the inspector's ability to conduct thorough inspections.

At the end of October, the families of two *E. coli* victims from the Topps outbreak brought a class-action lawsuit against the now-defunct company and the supermarkets that had sold the meat. Coverage of the lawsuit was less widespread and less damaging than the original coverage. Catherine McDonald, mother of a third-grade girl who became sick with *E. coli*, emphasized that the families were only looking to cover medical expenses and raise awareness of beef safety, and said, “This is to put more spotlight on the recall and how careful you have to be to cook your hamburgers to 160” (*Albany Times Union*, Oct. 3).

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) reports declined 31 percent this period, but the tone of coverage varied widely. The industry received favorable coverage in reports on USDA’s decision to lift of the ban on Canadian cattle.



Economics

- **Volume:** 450 articles, 41 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 48 rating, or neutral
- **Leading sub-issue:** Packer issues – 170 articles
- **Leading media:** *Associated Press* – 104 articles

Events concerning meatpackers throughout the country garnered significant media attention this period, and Topps Meat Co. was the most discussed beef processor in economics reporting. Topps Meat’s initial beef recall due to *E. coli* concerns, a USDA-mandated shutdown of Topps’ meat processing operations, the subsequent expansion of the recall and the company’s decision to close permanently generated considerable coverage this period. Such attention was moderately unfavorable overall to the beef industry. USDA’s decision to halt beef operations at Topps Meat due to inadequate safeguards at the plant, the department’s “18 day delay” in requesting a recall and Topps closing due to economic realities of the recall garnered the most negative reporting.

While the Topps recall coverage commonly addressed packer issues and had economic undertones, media coverage was

more focused on beef safety rather than economics. However, Topps Meat Co.’s permanent closure garnered economics-focused reporting. The company’s chief operating officer Anthony D’Urso was often featured in the reporting saying, “This is tragic for all concerned. In one week we have gone from the largest U.S. manufacturer of frozen hamburgers to a company that cannot overcome the economic reality of a recall this large” (*Miami Herald*, Oct. 5).

Foreign trade was the second most prominent sub-issue in September/October economics coverage. The topic was discussed in 17 percent of such reporting, largely surrounding U.S. beef trade relationships with South Korea and its Asian neighbors. The media continued to cover the difficulties of the U.S.-South Korea beef trade relationship. There were periodic stories throughout September of banned materials discovered in beef shipments. It was reported in several articles that South Korea responded to such discoveries by banning further imports from plants owned by Swift & Co. and Cargill. On this matter, the *Associated Press* quoted Sen. Ben Nelson, I-Neb., “I can’t imagine that these errors continue to be made. It’s a compliance issue. It doesn’t help our reputation when we can’t get it right. It undermines our credibility” (Sept. 5). Media outlets, including the *Washington Post* and *Houston Chronicle*, also reported on South Korea’s decision to halt all beef imports at the beginning of October. However, such coverage was not widespread and often consisted of brief reports. The media more widely covered beef trade discussions in the middle of October between the United States and South Korea. Such coverage reported little progress had been made, with South Korea refusing to fully open its market to U.S. beef imports. Coverage of U.S.-South Korea trade relations was slightly-to-moderately unfavorable toward the industry, as it often highlighted the continuation of BSE-related limitations on beef trade and the difficulties faced by U.S. meat plants in meeting the Asian nation’s regulations. Japan’s decision to suspend imports from a Cargill plant in Kansas following the delivery of beef tendons not properly identified also garnered similar coverage in a few media outlets.

Not all foreign trade coverage was unfavorable. The *Omaha World-Herald* favorably covered a Nebraska state government trade mission to Asia. The newspaper published several articles in early-to-mid-September reporting on commitments by Taiwan and Hong Kong to buy Nebraska beef and Macau’s agreement to promote beef from the state. The publication also issued a Sept. 20 editorial praising the “forward movement in regard to trade in Nebraska beef.” While the trade mission coverage often also addressed the restrictions enforced by South Korea and Japan on beef imports, it was moderately favorable overall.

Beef demand (51 reports, 55 rating) generated overall neutral coverage and remained the most favorable leading sub-issue for the industry. However, the favorability of its reporting weakened from moderately positive last period due in part

to reports of the inflationary effect of drought-elevated feedstock prices. Independently, the effect of ethanol production on beef prices and demand and the industry's response was occasionally reported. The *Chicago Tribune* published a Sept. 17 article in which meat producers were reportedly lobbying against the government requiring greater ethanol production. Separately, the *Denver Post* ran an extremely favorable article on its front page featuring the growth of steakhouses. According to the report "the number of fine-dining steak restaurants is up almost 17 percent from five years ago" in the Denver, Colo., area and 15 percent nationwide. In the coverage, Fred Lombardi, executive director of the Colorado Beef Council, explained the growth as being due to effective marketing of beef's nutritional benefits by the industry (Oct. 20).

Beef marketing

- **Volume:** 441 articles, 40 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 52 rating, or neutral
- **Leading sub-issue:** Ground beef – 246 articles
- **Leading media:** *Associated Press* – 36 articles

Ground beef coverage increased significantly this period due to media attention paid to several recalls resulting from *E. coli* concerns. Cargill, Interstate Meats, Blue Ribbon Meats and most notably, Topps Meats all announced recalls this period, affecting products sold at Safeway, Fred Meyer, Sam's Club and others. Topps received the bulk of unfavorable coverage due to its reported safety violations and closure. Coverage of Blue Ribbon's recall noted that it had received the tainted meat by accident from its distributor and was able to recall it before it was sold. Interstate Meats was the subject of a fairly favorable piece in the *Oregonian* that positioned the company as "confident" it would be able to recover from the recall due to its "strong reputation." The article went on to quote a number of attorneys specializing in foodborne illness cases who acknowledged that the company's honesty would soften the impact of the recall with customers (Sept. 1).

While there was an increase in negative coverage due to ground beef recalls, the volume of beef recipes decreased by 5 percent overall and ground beef recipes' volume fell by 15 percent. Several outlets published a traditional meatball recipe from the cookbook "Aromas of Aleppo" in preparation for the Jewish New Year celebrations of Rosh Hashanah. The change in season was signaled by heartier dishes like pot roasts and beef stews. Recipes featuring ethnic spices and unusual flavoring were also prominent. Recipes for Argentinean-style pot-roast and Latin-style beef appeared in the October issues of *Cooking Light* and *Good Housekeeping*, while *Gourmet* included a recipe for coffee-braised beef and the *Chicago Tribune* featured a recipe for short ribs flavored with black licorice extract (Oct. 24).

Other notable beef marketing stories included articles on the increasing demand for and availability of beef labeled

"organic" or "natural." Some of this coverage, however, was critical of the organic and natural beef industries for perpetuating the "myth" that beef labeled "natural" is "raised like those in a John Wayne movie, out on a ranch, eating grass and rounded up by cowboys" when in "reality, natural has less to do with how an animal is raised than how it is processed. The term simply means the meat is free of additives such as preservatives, artificial flavors or colors" (*San Antonio Express-News*, Sept. 3).

Nutrition/health

- **Volume:** 220 articles, 20 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 54 rating, or neutral
- **Leading sub-issue:** Nutritional vegetarianism – 61 articles
- **Leading media:** *Chicago Tribune* – 16 articles

Nutritional vegetarianism emerged as the leading sub-issue within nutrition/health reporting this period with coverage often consisting of vegetarian recipes appearing in the media. Vegan recipes accounted for several of these recipes, while many others consisted of meat-replacement meals, such as grilled Portobello mushroom as a steak stand-in and a vegetarian meatloaf. Nutritional vegetarianism coverage also stemmed from attention to art teacher Dave Warwak espousing his views on veganism to students at Fox River Grove Middle School in Illinois. In a *Chicago Tribune* report about the dispute between the school and the teacher on the appropriateness of his conduct, Warwak argued, "It's about health. It's about living longer" (Sept. 7). In another *Tribune* report, the teacher said, "I can't really see working there as long as those milk posters are up and they keep feeding poison to the kids" (Sept. 11). While news reports on the conflict in a nutritional context were generally negative as vegan/vegetarian activist comments were included more often, the *Chicago Tribune* issued favorable editorials Sept. 12 and 14 that were critical of Warwak and his attempts to indoctrinate the students.

Beef recipes containing nutritional information was the second most prominent sub-issue in nutrition/health reporting in September/October. These recipes appeared in 27 percent of nutrition and health coverage, with volume remaining relatively steady from the previous two-month period. Steak offerings were most common among beef recipes containing nutritional information – flank steak and edamame with wasabi dressing, grilled steak with herb sauce, gourmet grilled steak with berry/red wine glaze and pan-fried flank steak with onion and mojo sauce. Corresponding to the cooler fall weather, beef stew and chili recipes also were popular in the media.

Beef and kids and nutrition (15 reports, 58 rating) experienced extensive growth in media coverage this period, increasing from a single neutral story in July and August. This volume increase was fueled primarily by moderately

favorable media reports on a study on childhood obesity and iron deficiency. Several major newspapers across the nation published articles about the study's results in the first week of September. These articles noted that in order to fight obesity in children, parents should feed their toddlers foods high in iron, such as beef, instead of giving them excessive amounts of milk and juice. Coverage often highlighted that iron deficiency can also cause mental and behavioral delays, noting that the study underscores the importance of healthy eating habits in children ages 1 to 3. Additional attention on beef and kids and nutrition consisted of a few reports on altering school lunch programs around the country. The nature of this discussion was conflicted, with reports suggesting that hamburgers can be part of a healthy, balanced diet and others, mostly letters-to-the-editor, criticizing USDA and Congress for purchasing "high-fat, cholesterol-laden chicken nuggets and burgers" as part of the National School Lunch program (*New York Times*, Sept. 11).

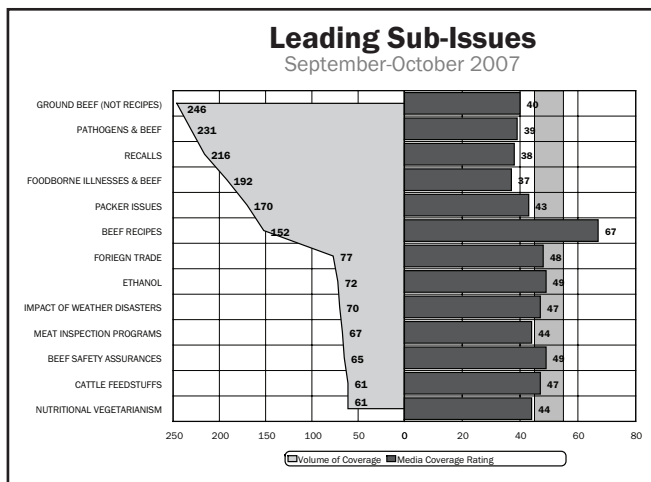
Environment

- **Volume:** 125 articles, 11 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 50 rating, or neutral
- **Leading sub-issue:** Cattle and wildlife populations – 44 articles
- **Leading media:** *Associated Press* – 43 articles

Cattle and wildlife populations supplanted cattle and public lands as the leading sub-issue in September/October. Media coverage was fueled by attention to rising wolf populations and their encroachment on cattle operations. The *Associated Press* generated much of this reporting, covering incidences of wolves attacking cattle, and ranchers killing those that threaten their livestock across the western United States. Coverage ranged from slightly unfavorable to slightly favorable, with the more positive reports focused on government efforts at mitigating the impact of wolves preying on cattle. A negative report highlighted a Montana rancher cited for the death of two wolves on his Madison Valley ranch. Roger Lang, who spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on trying to find ways for cattle and wolves to coexist, was accused by the federal government of violating the Endangered Species Act. Lang reportedly took a more aggressive stance toward a pack of 13 wolves on his ranch after an additional five yearling heifers were killed over the summer. The media also covered ranchers coexisting or contending with elk, prairie dogs, bison, coyotes and mountain lions.

Cattle and public lands was the second most prominent sub-issue discussed in environmental coverage. The topic's prevalence was fueled by attention to state and federal government management of public grazing lands, including how predatory wildlife like wolves are handled and the opening-up of federal lands to ranchers affected by wildfires or drought.

Cattle and global warming (14 reports, 39 rating) also appeared in environmental reporting this period and was the least favorable leading topic. Media coverage of a special energy and health series of the medical journal the *Lancet* in mid-September and a report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization accounted for much of the coverage on cattle and global warming. The *Associated Press* and the *Courier-Journal* reported on the *Lancet* piece that called on people to eat less meat, specifically fewer steaks and hamburgers, to help slow global warming. The *Associated Press* article included comments from one of the study's authors, Dr. John Powles, a public health expert at Cambridge University, who claimed that livestock accounted for nearly a quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions worldwide and suggested consumers eat less meat to counter global warming. Powles also implored a reduction in red meat consumption in order to decrease heart disease, cancer and obesity rates (Sept. 13). The most negative coverage on the sub-issue was an extremely unfavorable *Los Angeles*



Beef and cancer (14 reports, 40 rating) began to gain significant media attention at the end of October. Roughly half of beef and cancer coverage stemmed from several Oct. 31 reports that covered the World Cancer Research Fund's findings and recommendations from a six-year review of 7,000 studies on cancer. While the coverage primarily focused on weight as a culprit in causing cancer, excess red meat consumption was highlighted as raising one's risk factor, along with consumption of any processed meat. The morning the report was announced at an American Institute for Cancer Research press conference, "Good Morning America" ran a highly unfavorable segment featuring the restriction on red meat consumption as the second WCRF recommendation, stressing, with graphics, the "stringent" limits on eating no more than 2.5 ounces a day or 18 ounces a week of red meat. Additionally, processed meats were characterized as being "even more dangerous."

Times Oct. 15 editorial that reported, “Livestock emissions are a leading source of greenhouse gases. One solution may be to eat less meat.” The editorial cited United Nations’ statistics that “livestock are responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide...more than all planes, trains and automobiles on the planet.” Countering the negativity of the *LA Times* piece were several letters-to-the-editor that mocked the editorial and questioned the efficacy of becoming a vegetarian on climate change. Still, overall cattle and global warming coverage, which included accounts of a Unitarian church moving towards vegetarianism for environmental reasons and a school having already done so for the same concern, was moderately unfavorable.

Animal Rights

- **Volume:** 73 reports, 7 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 50 rating, or neutral
- **Leading sub-issue:** Ethical vegetarianism – 33 reports
- **Leading media:** *Chicago Tribune* – 12 reports

Ethical vegetarianism maintained its position as the leading sub-issue for the September/October period, appearing in 45 percent of animal rights coverage. The sub-issue retained its prominence due to a dispute in early September between a vegan teacher and the administration and parents of students at Fox River Grove Middle School in Illinois. Art teacher Dave Warwak was accused of inappropriately using his position to promulgate his views on animal cruelty and veganism. Though coverage included a number of nutritional and ethical arguments for vegetarianism through Warwak’s supporters, reaction to the teacher in the media was negative, with a *Chicago Tribune* editorial calling his campaign “officially over the top” (Sept. 12).

Coverage about People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) increased again slightly in volume this period, in part due to mentions in the Warwak coverage. Coverage was mostly neutral, promoting vegetarianism without specifically mentioning the meat industry. In September, actress and vegetarian Alicia Silverstone also generated PETA-related attention by appearing naked in a promotional ad for the group’s “goveg.com” campaign that was to air in Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth. Later reports noted that the ad was not aired in the Houston market due to Comcast cable system’s no nudity policy for advertisers. Similarly, the *Detroit Free Press* ran an interview with a PETA activist who protested nude to draw attention to the cause of animal cruelty (Oct. 4).

Cruelty in production practices also generated coverage this period, with a report on New Jersey’s development of treatment standards for farm animals (*Associated Press*, Oct. 12). Most other mentions of animal cruelty appeared in letters-to-the-editor. This coverage did not specifically call out the beef industry, instead focusing on the meat industry

in general. In response to a vegetarian restaurant review in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, a representative from the Humane Society of the United States wrote, “Nearly 10 billion farm animals endure miserable lives and are slaughtered in often shocking ways...too inhumane for any caring person to support” (Sept. 14). Separately, a veterinarian commenting on an article about the shortage of farm veterinarians wrote, “I found it increasingly difficult to perform procedures or ship cattle to slaughter in a manner I found inhumane” (*Albany Times-Union*, Oct. 14).

Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism-related reports almost doubled this period from 46 articles in July/August. Favorability remained unchanged at a slightly unfavorable 43.

Nearly one-third of the reports relating to ethical vegetarianism concerned the dispute between Fox River Grove Middle School and a vegan art teacher Dave Warwak, primarily reported in the *Chicago Tribune*. Initially, articles focused on the details of the dispute, but as the conflict developed, arguments for vegetarianism were featured more prominently. Comments by Warwak and his supporters were frequently cited in the media. For example, Nathan Runkle, executive director of the activist group Mercy for Animals commented, “It’s appropriate for students to learn about the horrendous cruelty that animals endure on factory farms, and about the benefits of a healthy diet” (*Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 7). However, public opinion was less favorable towards Warwak and his arguments. Editorials and letters-to-the-editor accused Warwak of overreaching and abusing his position as a teacher to promote his beliefs. One such contributor wrote, “There is nothing appropriate about sharing one’s personal views in front of an audience that is there for a wholly different reason, can’t easily get up and leave, or both. The situation is even more egregious when the espouser is in a position of authority, like a teacher” (*Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 14).

Although nutritional vegetarianism appeared in twice as many reports as ethical vegetarianism, the two sub-issues often appeared alongside each other, such as in coverage of the Warwak dispute and in an interview with musician Chrissie Hynde, who said, “Our digestive systems aren’t [made to eat meat]. Our jaws swing from left to right like herbivores. Go to a slaughterhouse. I don’t have to go, because I have an imagination. I can imagine what an animal goes through” (*Miami Herald*, Sept. 2). The media attention paid to potential *E. coli*-tainted beef also led to discussion of nutritional vegetarianism. The *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* ran an opinion piece by Susan Levin of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine who argued that meatless diets not only reduce the risk of contracting *E. coli* but also obesity, heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Levin wrote, “Why take risks associated with meat when a vegetarian diet can help eliminate the risk of foodborne illness, improve overall health and prevent

disease?” (Oct. 5). Vegetarian recipes again represented a large percentage of nutritional vegetarianism-related coverage, with dishes often touted as meat replacements.

Separately, vegetarianism was mentioned in several articles discussing religion and food, two examples of which were a report on the growing “eco-kosher” movement and a report on Rev. George Malkmus’ “Biblical diet.” Although the eco-kosher article touched on the ethical treatment of animals, it was not critical of the industry, even quoting a kosher vegetarian who worked to get kosher-certified meat for her synagogue, saying, “Here I am, leading this meat thing, and we don’t even eat meat in our house” (*Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 12). This report and others on religion and environmentalism touched on both ethical and environmental arguments for vegetarian diets.

Conclusions

- The Topps meat *E. coli*-related recall significantly affected beef industry reporting this period. Extensive coverage of the recall drove down the favorability of beef safety, economics and beef marketing coverage. While negative attention was given to the beef industry, the bulk of criticism was directed toward USDA and the reported delay in issuing the recall.
- Multiple beef recalls during the period brought renewed attention to the issue of food safety in the United States. Numerous comments in the media noted that the industry had made great strides in tackling foodborne illness, yet “something happened” this summer. The recalls also brought new demands for reform in the nation’s oversight of food safety, with many critics calling for expanded powers to be given to USDA in ordering recalls.
- U.S. beef exports to Asia continued to affect economics reporting this period. Media reports highlighted ongoing negotiations between the United States and South Korea, as well as limitations placed by the latter country on U.S. beef. Helping to mitigate the unfavorable nature of these reports was favorable reporting on initiatives by Nebraska to expand markets for its beef in Asia.
- This period, the media continued to report on the relationship between cattle and wildlife populations. Articles on the subject were mixed, however, with some in the media praising efforts to control wolf populations, while others criticized the government and ranchers for efforts to protect livestock.
- Art teacher Dave Warwak’s attempts to preach veganism to his students drew strong opinions from critics and supporters alike. While Warwak’s supporters were frequently quoted in news reports espousing vegetarian and vegan viewpoints, opinion pieces and editorials heavily criticized his actions, claiming he had seriously overstepped his bounds.