



Biography:

Dr. Colin Palmer is an Associate Professor of Theriogenology (Animal Reproduction) at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine. Originally from Nova Scotia, Dr. Palmer worked in mixed practices in Ontario and British Columbia and has owned/operated a practice in Saskatchewan. Dr. Palmer along with his wife Kim and children Lauren, Emily and Carter run a herd of purebred Red Angus cattle under the KC Cattle Co. name.

For beef producers it is frustrating to see how many retailers and restaurant chains are offering Beyond Meat products to consumers. Many say they would never eat the product and consider it high treason for anyone associated with our industry to admit to such a crime. On the other hand, it is fascinating to watch. Certainly the sales reports show there is demand for the product and it seems that every week I hear of another big-name restaurant chain that is offering a meat-alternative product. I have read every article that has come across my desk about Beyond Meat and meat alternatives and I have even tried a Beyond Meat burger (Beyond Burger) and have so far survived the experience. I must admit that I had heard so much hype about it that I was eager to give it a try, but at the same time I felt a bit rebellious and guilty. To balance the experience and ease my conscience, I ordered a conventional burger and took one or two bites of each product in sequence. From my point of view, if you like beef burgers made with the real thing the Beyond Meat burger was disappointing. The dominant taste was the lettuce and other ingredients used to garnish the burger, whereas the beef burger was juicier and certainly a much tastier experience. I had to wonder if I preferred the beef burger because that is what I had been raised with and had become accustomed to in my diet. I concluded that for some the Beyond Meat product would be something they like and it likely would attract those customers who would otherwise not eat meat.

Nobody likes competition! However, what can we learn from the competition, and from the launch and early success of Beyond Meat? To gain market share new products must demonstrate they are better than what already exists – price, taste, country of origin, carbon footprint, reputation of the processor/marketer to name a few have all been used in the marketing of meat. “Better for your health” seems to be the platform chosen by Beyond Meats marketing executives. Ethan Brown, founder and CEO of Beyond Meat said that comparing the nutrient composition of a Beyond Burger was too simplistic because it doesn’t factor in the reported health risks that are associated with eating red and processed meat namely, cancer and heart disease. Another claim is that the Beyond Meat burger contains no cholesterol or animal-derived saturated fat and is lower in saturated fat than burgers made from fattier cuts of beef. For the most part, the research supporting the link between the consumption of red meat and disease in humans is weak, however, Beyond Meat’s initial success in the market place seems to be fueled by more than just a healthier-than-the-other-stuff platform. Certainly one accelerant has been a timely and widely published misinterpretation of Health Canada’s recommendations in the recently updated Canada Food Guide. The recommendation was to choose more plant-based protein alternatives yet this was spun into eating less meat which was not the original intention. The truth is that Canada’s Food Guide does not say that plant proteins should be consumed at the expense

A Breeder's...: Veterinary Perspective
The Beyond Meat Phenomenon

of animal protein. In fact, most Canadians consume barely enough protein with just 17 percent of our caloric intake coming from protein. That puts us at the bottom end of the recommended range of 17 to 35 percent. Another fact is that 44 percent of the saturated fat we consume comes from ultra-processed versus just 10 percent from red meat. A 75-gram, or slightly more than 2-ounce portion of real meat contains 184 calories and 26 grams of protein. Compare this with Beyond Burger which contains 20 grams of protein and 250 calories in a 113-gram (4-ounce) patty; roughly half the protein density. Furthermore, if you look at the list of ingredients you will notice salt; at 390 milligrams of sodium per patty this will quickly add up to over a 1000 milligrams with the addition of a hamburger bun and condiments. There is about four times as much sodium in a Beyond Meat patty as there is in the real thing. The Beyond Burger contains over twenty ingredients and by definition is an ultra-processed food compared with beef which has one ingredient – BEEF. Eating plants is not a new thing for humans and unfortunately most of the ultra-processed foods are plant-based. We should encourage the consumption of more fresh fruits and vegetables which are better for us in the raw state. Meat and vegetables work well together enhancing digestion and absorption of nutrients – kind of like it was meant to be!

George Atuan, a noteworthy financial advisor and contributor of articles to Seeking Alpha - a publication offering market insight, financial analysis, investment ideas and stock research provided his take on a Beyond Meat product. After trying a few bites he found that the taste reminded him of food he had eaten in the Middle East and described it as nothing more than an overpriced falafel. George provided seven reasons why he would not buy Beyond Meat stock: 1) Taste; 2) No economic moat – a distinct advantage a product has over its competitors allowing it to protect market share; 3) Too much formidable competition from real meat; 4) A production bottleneck from a lack of

processing capability; 5) Low returns in the steady state when Beyond Meat has to compete with the meat industry; 6) Not a healthy substitute for meat; and 7) Valued to perfection – to justify a stock price of \$150 per share sales will need to reach \$22 billion by 2030; current sales are less than 1 percent of that.

Putting all of this information in perspective, what is the real reason that meat substitutes like Beyond Meat are able to gain any traction at all? It is really quite simple ... the development and marketing of these products is controlled by a segment of the population who do not want to eat meat and they want all of us to adopt their views. In order to get the consumer to buy into their ideal they must find something to base their marketing strategy on. For Beyond Meat to tout themselves as a healthy alternative, which they simply are not, the choice will likely be their undoing. It seems that our society is fine with animals eating animals – thank you Discovery Channel and the Pet Food Industry! Maybe we need a campaign to highlight the importance of meat in the human diet and how the anthropomorphism (individuals who attribute human traits, intentions and emotions to animals) have driven us to consume ultra-processed, unhealthy food.

International demand for Canadian beef has been strong and growing in 2019. A consistent, high quality product and our traceability system are key factors contributing to our success. But what can we learn from Beyond Meat? Embrace research to study the role of meat in the human diet and the value of forage eating animals in our ecosystem. Continue to educate our consumers about our product and how it is produced. Check out our competition's website and see what they are doing that we could do too. Some ideas I gleaned from Beyond Meat ... will packaging two ready to cook hamburger patties work for beef? Can we market new products like pre-seasoned hamburger ready for tacos?

Be proud of our industry and continue to produce and market a high quality product.