

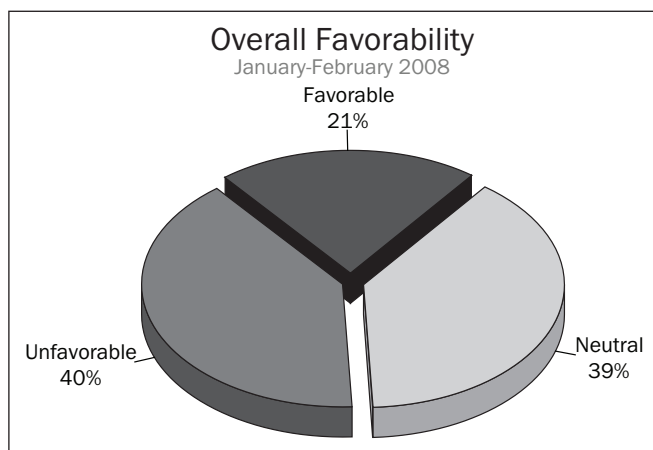
Beef industry media analysis

January/February 2008

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

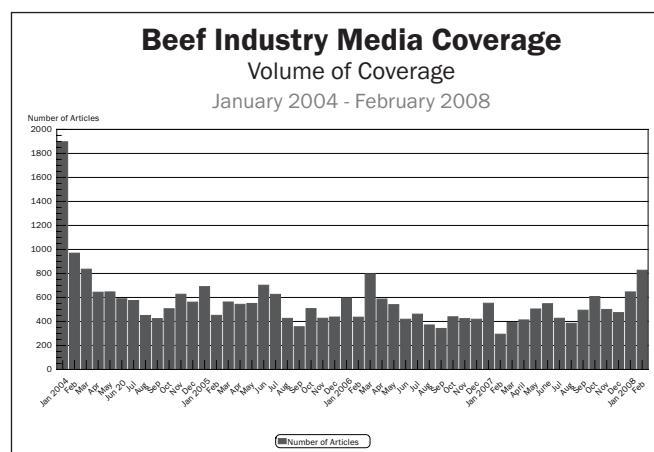
- Total volume of coverage: 1,473 articles
- Average favorability rating: 46 or neutral
- Estimated impressions: 760 million
- Leading media outlet: *Associated Press* (238 articles)

Media reporting on the beef industry during January and February increased 50 percent compared to last period, garnering 1,473 articles. The tone of these articles decreased four points, averaging a neutral 46 rating. The volume and favorability of coverage primarily was influenced by allegations of animal mistreatment at the Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company, and the subsequent recall.

For the January/February period, the volume of favorable coverage decreased 8 percentage-points to represent 20 percent of overall coverage. Unfavorable coverage increased 11 percentage-points and represented 39 percent of overall volume. Neutral coverage remained static, representing 41 percent of total coverage.

Beef safety returned as this period's leading issue due to attention to the Hallmark/Westland controversy, and accounted for almost 50 percent of all coverage. Notably, the January/February 2008 volume of beef safety coverage was more than three times larger than the volume of the leading issue last period.

Reporting about animal rights increased exponentially this period, making it the second leading issue among beef industry reporting. Coverage was driven in large part by release of the undercover video shot by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) at the Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company in California. This reporting drove down the favorability of animal rights coverage to an unfavorable 36.



Although it comprised a smaller percentage of total coverage, the volume of economics reporting remained similar to last period. Article volume increased by only 10, resulting in 395 articles, and favorability remained at a neutral 48 rating.

Beef marketing saw the biggest improvement in favorability in January/February, averaging a favorable 64 rating, up three points from November/December. "Ground beef recipes" remained a strong issue, garnering a favorable 68 rating for the period.

Environmental coverage continued to be largely driven by reports on the relationship between cattle and wildlife populations. Often balanced reporting on the issue contributed to the issue's neutral 49 rating.

Key findings

- The 143 million pound recall of beef from Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company triggered significant coverage and renewed skepticism about the safety of the nation's beef supply and the competency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).
- The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved food from cloned animals as safe for human consumption in mid-January. While coverage of cloning was not nearly as negative as coverage of the recall, the issue was controversial, generating a wide range of opinions from industry groups, editorial boards, consumers and food advocacy groups.
- Numerous reports highlighted increasing commodity prices, generating a steady stream of reports on the rising cost of food.
- The Hallmark/Westland beef recall and FDA's cloning announcement both raised safety questions among U.S. trading partners reluctant to further open their markets to U.S. beef.

Beef safety

- **Volume:** 701 articles, 48 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 41 rating, or slightly unfavorable
- **Leading sub-issue:** Beef safety assurance – 326 articles
- **Leading media:** *Associated Press* – 135 articles

Release of the HSUS undercover video of animal mistreatment at the Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company in late January spurred widespread outrage from industry officials, consumers and activists. Significant media reporting renewed doubts about the safety of the nation's beef supply and made it one of the leading national news stories of the period.

Although the animal welfare aspect of the story was not completely overshadowed, the media immediately latched on to the fact that Hallmark/Westland was a leading supplier to school lunch programs across the country, with dozens of outlets reporting on whether their local districts had received any products from the company. In other areas, outlets used the angle to publish broader articles about the school lunch program and its suppliers.

Parents United for Public Education director Helen Gym commented "The National School Lunch program has clearly not been using products that are of high quality" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, Feb. 21), while Rep. Rosa DeLauro called for reform of the program in order to ensure that "the school lunch program does not become the industry dumping ground for bad meat" (*Associated Press*, Feb. 20).

Once the recall was announced, papers reported about how districts were disposing of the meat and what they were serving in its place, with school district spokespeople

appearing frequently in media coverage. Although they did not appear as often as industry supporters did, their predominantly neutral commentary was focused on the cost to the districts and reassuring parents that the health risks were negligible. As South Carolina Public Schools official Craig Brooks noted, "It's a very low, minimal risk for the child. These products have been cooked to the optimum temperature...I think anything that was there was probably killed" (*Associated Press*, Feb. 19).

Reports often relayed to the public that the recall was a protective measure, issued due to the animal handling violations evidenced in the video, not because of health risks. USDA Secretary Ed Schafer was frequently quoted, explaining, "Because the cattle did not receive complete and proper inspection, the Food Safety and Inspection Service has determined them to be unfit for human food and the company is conducting a recall" (*Commercial Appeal*, Feb. 18). Continued reassurances by a variety of sources that the risk of illness was extremely remote somewhat tempered the negativity of the coverage.

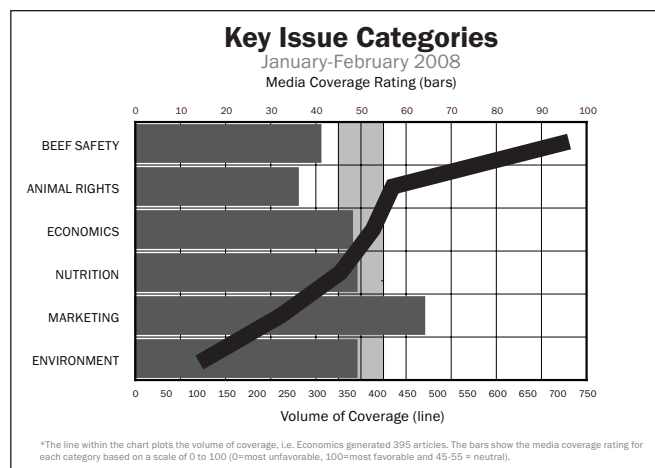
In addition to several USDA spokespeople, industry representatives were quoted on the interlocking safeguards protecting the beef supply chain. Bo Reagan of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) stressed that the organization "support[s] USDA's recall as a precautionary measure. At the same time, we can say with confidence that the beef supply is safe...There are multiple safety hurdles before it arrives at our grocery stores or restaurants" (*Washington Post*, Feb. 18). American Meat Institute general counsel Mark Dopp stated, "It is important to note that the government has found no evidence that the meat was unsafe. The fact that an animal becomes non ambulatory does not necessarily mean it is ill" (*Denver Post*, Feb. 19).

In explaining the need for the preventative measures on "downer cows," the media frequently mentioned that these animals present an increased risk of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), *E. coli* and salmonella, noting "Dragging a sick cow through feces just before slaughter heightens the risk of *E. coli*, salmonella and even mad cow disease" (*Denver Post*, Feb. 19).

After the recall announcement, coverage shifted to focus on renewed calls for legislative reform of the nation's food safety system. USDA was criticized for not conducting adequate inspections. Sen. Barbara Boxer said, "I want to know why USDA cannot stop this conduct right now. Clearly, it does not seem to be implementing regulations in a very effective fashion" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, Feb. 20). Rep. Rosa DeLauro was a prominent figure in the media, renewing her efforts to create a single agency charged with protecting the safety of the food supply, saying, "Food safety ought to be of a high enough priority in this nation that we have a single agency that deals with it and not an agency that

is responsible for promoting a product, selling a product and then as an afterthought dealing with how our food supply is safe” (*Fresno Bee*, Feb. 20).

Representatives from the Consumers’ Union, Center for Food Safety and the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) chimed in on coverage as well. “We think Congress needs to act now to modernize the law. There have been several examples over the last several years where our food safety laws are just not working,” argued Caroline Smith DeWaal, director of CSPI. The Consumers’ Union’s Jean Halloran echoed calls for USDA to release the names of retailers who had purchased the recalled meat, saying, “Consumers have no way of knowing whether the store from which they’ve purchased their meat was involved in a recall” (*Reuters*, Feb. 19).



Editorials were almost unanimous in their criticism of USDA, describing the situation as “scandalous” and “appalling.” The *St. Petersburg Times* charged, “This is just the latest proof that the federal food-safety bureaucracy is broken” (Feb. 19), while the *Philadelphia Inquirer* argued that “...the violations that occurred under the noses of USDA inspectors raise serious concerns about whether the government is up to the job of protecting public health. It’s time to, ah, beef up the number of inspectors and the scrutiny at slaughterhouses” (Feb. 19). Reader responses echoed those sentiments, with a *Dallas Morning News* reader advising, “Don’t be fooled into thinking this is an isolated case, as there are very few USDA inspectors out there doing their jobs. If you are a meat-eater, be afraid. Be very afraid” (Feb. 22).

By the end of the period, coverage shifted toward the cost and the waste the recall generated. “The food’s safe... We’re going to recall all this food and destroy it. This is morally and ethically wrong,” said Craig Wilson, Costco’s vice president of food safety (*Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 26). Industry adversary and food poisoning litigation specialist William Marler agreed, saying, “Recalls should be reserved for products that put the public at risk, and this isn’t it” (*USA Today*, Feb. 25).

Although largely forgotten after the release of the HSUS video, the media’s attention in January was dominated by FDA’s decision to approve food from cloned animals. The announcement generated widespread debate in the national media as to whether such products are indeed safe, with critics questioning the validity of FDA’s research. Center for Food Safety director Joseph Mendelson said, “The FDA’s risk assessment is inadequate. It hasn’t looked at the data over a long period of time” (NBC “Nightly News,” Jan. 15). However, the media also quoted proponents of the technology, including University of Connecticut researcher Cindy Tian, who pointed to the strength of the research, saying, “In fact, cloned animals have been studied much more than naturally produced animals. We have more data on them than for any other animal that we eat” (*Washington Post*, Jan. 15).

FDA’s decision was immediately met with negative reactions from consumers. Newspapers across the country published letters-to-the-editor, including one from a *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reader, “With genetically modified crops that can literally turn our intestines into pesticide factories, hormone-infused dairy products that cause early-onset puberty, irradiated ‘raw’ nuts and now cloned-animal foods, all unlabeled, it is unclear how the FDA is trying to protect the public. Sad to say, the agency charged with the safety of our food supply is making it untenable” (Jan. 22). Other consumers cited the approval of products from cloned animals as another reason to choose organic or natural foods or to simply forego animal products completely. Many retailers appeared in the media responding to consumer concerns by announcing that they wouldn’t sell products from cloned animals.

Editorial coverage of FDA’s decision accepted it as sound, but advocated strongly for product labeling. The *Economist* opined that if the industry truly is confident in the benefits of cloning, it should be willing to label its products. The *San Jose Mercury News* wrote, “The Food and Drug Administration deserves credit for carefully studying the products of cloned animals. Now, after six years of research by a variety of independent animal health experts, the FDA should allow farmers to sell meat, milk and other products from cloned livestock to U.S. supermarkets... The products from cloned animals and their offspring should be clearly labeled as such on all packaging. There is a great deal of squeamishness about animal cloning, and American consumers are entitled to know whether the products they are purchasing are from cloned animals” (Jan. 15).

Despite the controversy it generated, coverage of FDA’s ruling was well-balanced overall, averaging a neutral 48 rating. While highlighting the various objections to cloning, articles also demystified the cloning process by educating consumers on what it entailed. Cloning frequently was compared to less expensive and accepted reproductive technologies such as in-vitro fertilization or embryo splitting.

The discovery of a 12th BSE-infected cow in Canada received very little media attention in the United States. However, mentions of BSE noticeably increased due to frequent mentions of the disease in relation to downer cows and the Hallmark/Westland beef recall. These BSE mentions were brief, noting that the risk of contracting Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease was extremely low, and there was no evidence that the downer cows at the Hallmark/Westland plant carried BSE.

Animal Rights

- **Volume:** 428 articles, 29 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 36 rating, or solidly unfavorable
- **Leading sub-issue:** Cruelty in production practices – 332 articles
- **Leading media:** *Associated Press* – 77 articles

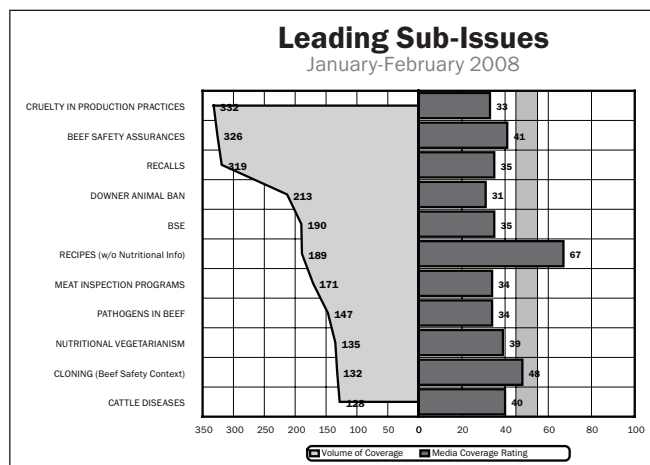
The undercover video depicting animal mistreatment at a California slaughterhouse was a source of widespread criticism toward the industry. Although news reports later focused on the beef safety aspects and calls for reforming USDA's inspection system, the first wave of coverage focused on the egregious breach of animal welfare laws revealed by the tape. Temple Grandin described the images as "one of the worst animal abuse videos I have ever viewed" (*Washington Post*, Jan. 30). Industry officials and ranchers expressed dismay, such as when Oklahoma Beef Council Executive Director Heather Buckmaster commented, "We're obviously appalled by the situation at the plant" (*Tulsa World*, Feb. 19).

Many industry representatives were quick to communicate that practices seen at the Hallmark/Westland plant should not be viewed as indicative of the entire beef industry. NCBA vice president Bo Reagan, who appeared in nine reports, emphasized, "The welfare of our animals – that's the heart and soul of our operations" (*Associated Press*, Feb. 19).

The tape offered an opening for animal rights activists to chastise the industry. HSUS President Wayne Pacelle consistently communicated his organization's belief that such abuse was widespread throughout the industry, saying, "I think this is the typical rhetoric and typical false assurances that we hear from the industry after glaring problems have been exposed. I think we can't say for sure one way or another, but it's certainly a bad sign for the industry and the USDA to have been exposed for their failures in this single, random investigation" (*Associated Press*, Feb. 19).

The inhumane treatment at the Westland/Hallmark facility prompted outrage from consumers. Some pointed to the violations as further justification for buying organic beef. An editorial in the *Albuquerque Journal* warned that processors risk alienating customers by not taking animal welfare seriously, arguing, "If industry leaders want to maintain a healthy demand for beef, they should take the lead in culling unhealthy, inhumane operators out of the herd" (Feb. 20).

Separately, stories on FDA's declaration that food from cloned animals is safe for consumption often highlighted the ethical qualms of many consumers in regard to cloning. Reports often noted that many believe that cloning technology is cruel to animals because of higher incidences of deformities and diseases. HSUS President Wayne Pacelle charged that "FDA did not give adequate consideration to the welfare of these animals" (*Washington Post*, Jan. 16).



Economics

- **Volume:** 395 articles, 27 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 48 rating, or neutral
- **Leading sub-issue:** Foreign trade – 104 articles
- **Leading media:** *Associated Press* – 85 articles

Beef and foreign trade reporting was fueled by discussion of domestic safety concerns potentially having an adverse affect on U.S. beef exports.

Numerous reports on the FDA ruling declaring meat and milk from cloned livestock to be safe for human consumption addressed the reactions in overseas markets. This coverage was moderately unfavorable to neutral toward the beef industry. Articles noted that while several Asian governments intend to review the safety of meat from cloned animals, and that the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies does not refute the FDA human safety assessment, U.S. beef from cloned cattle is not likely to gain access to markets of either region anytime soon. According to a Jan. 18 *Washington Post* article, European ethics groups implored the European Commission to prohibit cloning due to animal welfare concerns. Other reports noted USDA asked livestock producers to continue the voluntary moratorium on processing cloned animals for food as the agency needed a transition period to get safety studies to foreign trade partners.

The Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company recall was cited in numerous reports as being used by foreign officials in markets closed, or with restricted access to U.S. beef as an additional reason not to reduce trade barriers. Several

newspapers, including the *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post* and *San Jose Mercury News*, published a version of a Feb. 23 *Associated Press* article featuring comments from USDA Secretary Ed Schafer. According to the article, the secretary, in acknowledging that negotiations to ship U.S. beef to Japan and South Korea have been delayed, noted the recall “prompted diplomats to ask why the U.S. can’t produce safe meat.” This coverage, which was solidly unfavorable overall, highlighted the troubled trade relations the United States has had with these markets since the discovery of the first case of BSE in 2003. This coverage spurred the two-point drop in the favorability of beef and foreign trade coverage to a neutral 47 rating.

“Beef industry and the U.S. economy” was the second most discussed economics sub-issue. With Tyson Foods reporting significant losses on beef sales this period, there were several reports highlighting the problems the beef industry is encountering in the current economy. In addition to ethanol production increasing feed costs, an undersupply of cattle and an inability to increase beef prices were often cited as negatively affecting Tyson and the industry. According to the *Kansas City Star*, “The company’s losses on beef sales widened because meat prices haven’t kept pace with higher costs for the cattle it slaughters” (Jan. 28). Tyson CEO Dick Bond appeared frequently, emphasizing that “for the foreseeable future, consumers will pay more and more for food, especially protein” (*New York Times*, Jan. 29).

Many news outlets relayed concerns about the impact that a possible recession and ever-increasing food prices will have on “beef demand” (50 reports, 55 rating). Morningstar analyst Ann Gilpin cautioned that Tyson may be limited in its ability to fully pass on higher costs to customers (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Jan. 29). However, Livestock Marketing Information Center economist Jim Robb reasoned, “Overall it is the higher value beef cuts that struggle the most when we have recession. I think history shows that. We won’t see beef consumption change much, but you will see some of the higher-value beef cuts under a little more pressure than you will see across the board” (*Reuters*, Jan. 22). This message was echoed in several articles recommending consumers buy cheaper cuts of beef to reduce spending at the supermarket.

Nutrition/Health

- **Volume:** 341 articles, 23 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 49 rating, or neutral
- **Leading sub-issue:** Nutritional vegetarianism – 135 articles
- **Leading media:** *Miami Herald* – 21 articles

Nutritional vegetarianism was the leading sub-issue within nutrition/health reporting this period, with rising food prices prompting several articles highlighting vegetarianism as a cheaper option than beef. In a representative article on planning both healthy and budget-conscious meals, the

Fort Worth Star-Telegram recommended that instead of assuming meat is an essential part of a meal “think ‘flexitarian’...incorporate colorful vegetables into an omelet or frittata for a one-dish supper” (Jan. 9). The article quoted nutritionist Valerie Henderson as saying that most Americans already eat more protein than is necessary. Separately, the message that vegetarian recipes and meat alternatives are a healthy and satisfying meal option appeared often in media reports this period.

Also garnering a large amount of attention this period were the sub-issues beef and fat (49 reports, 50 rating) and lean beef (50 reports, 60 rating). Most discussion of beef and its impact on health consisted of passing mentions in pieces on various diet plans or general nutritional advice. Coverage was mixed, with beef positioned in reports on medical studies as a contributor to heart disease and high cholesterol, but endorsed by nutritionists in other reports as part of a healthy diet.

The release of a report by the *International Journal of Cancer* linking diet to cancer risk in women led to coverage that noted the study’s conflicting results regarding meat and dairy consumption, often concluding with the study’s general recommendation to limit “red meat and saturated fat” (*Reuters*, Feb. 21).

More prominent than coverage of various medical studies, however, were reports focused on general nutritional advice, which frequently suggested that readers simply replace fattier beef products like hamburgers with healthier cuts such as lean ground beef and top round. “Today” show nutritionist Madelyn Fernstrom cited beef as a good source of monounsaturated fats in a segment on how to lose belly fat (Jan. 15). In another segment on portion control, she noted that there are 20 cuts of beef just as lean as or leaner than chicken that would enable dieters to stay within that 500 calorie meal limit (Jan. 23).

Some outlets suggested organic or grass-fed beef as a healthier replacement to conventionally raised beef, claiming it had a healthier fat composition and more nutrients. These suggestions appeared in both medically focused articles and beef recipes. A report about the impact of corn products on obesity quoted UNC Chapel Hill professor Barry Popkin warning that, “beef from corn-fattened cattle tends to have more artery-clogging saturated fats than grass-fed beef. Research also suggests it’s lower in certain healthier substances like omega-3 fatty acids” (*Charlotte Observer*, Jan. 22). Meanwhile, the *Indianapolis Star* offered tips for healthy Super Bowl Sunday snack ideas, including the suggestion that readers “improve your favorite chili recipe by using grass-fed beef, which has leaner fats than the more traditional variety” (Jan. 29).

Beef Marketing

- **Volume:** 241 articles, 16 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 64 rating, or solidly favorable
- **Leading sub-issue:** Beef recipes – 188 articles
- **Leading media:** *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* – 12 articles

Beef recipes was the most prominent source of beef marketing coverage in January/February. Beef recipes appeared in 78 percent of beef marketing reports, with slow cooked recipes and comfort meals, including pot roasts, chilies and stews, contributing considerably to coverage this period. Notably, the *Rocky Mountain News* published an extremely favorable piece, entitled “Why we’ve always loved beef,” that highlighted soups, stews, roasts, meatloaf and tacos as comfort foods.

Beef choices was the second most prominent beef marketing sub-issue of the period. Numerous reports gave favorable attention to the beef industry adapting to evolving attitudes and tastes by offering a greater array of beef choices. One such story appeared in the *Tulsa World* on Jan. 17. The article highlighted the importance of the beef industry adapting to trends, with consumers willing to pay a premium for red meat that is “unique,” whether that be natural, organic or locally grown. However, in the wake of FDA’s cloning approval, the HSUS video and the Hallmark/Westland beef recall, there was unfavorable editorial coverage imploring consumers to eat only natural, organic or locally raised beef, which contributed to beef choices being the least favorable sub-issue. Beef choices reporting was neutral overall, with 54 favorability rating, as the media often portrayed the beef industry as seeking growth by becoming more adept at catering to a wider variety of consumer demands.

Environment

- **Volume:** 118 reports, 8 percent of total
- **Favorability:** 49 rating, or neutral
- **Leading sub-issue:** Cattle and wildlife – 46 reports
- **Leading media:** *Associated Press* – 54 reports

Cattle and wildlife populations continued to be the leading environmental sub-issue. The oftentimes adversarial relationship between ranchers and wolves was once again a prominent subject of media discussion this period. Debate surrounding the removal of the gray wolf from the endangered species list generated considerable coverage. While rancher and cattle interaction with wolves was not the primary focus of such articles, reports highlighted the threat that the animals pose to cattle and how the delisting would enable ranchers to respond more quickly and effectively to that threat. Such accounts were largely neutral, as the media addressed the rising nuisance of wolves preying on cattle alongside the prospect of cattleman being given a freer hand

to deal with the predators. Efforts to combat the spread of brucellosis also were a source of coverage regarding cattle and wildlife populations.

Cattle and public lands was the second most prominent environmental sub-issue with 19 reports. While coverage of cattle and public lands increased by 58 percent this period, the favorability of that attention decreased seven points to a neutral 45 rating. Discussion of the sub-issue was focused on efforts throughout the country to restrict cattle grazing on public lands. The *Associated Press* was the most prominent source of this coverage, reporting on such developments as the Idaho-based Western Watersheds Project threatening to sue Washington state if it approves cattle grazing in the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area (Jan. 31). The *Albuquerque Journal* published one of the least favorable articles of the period. The front page, Feb. 9 article, covered Santa Fe-based WildEarth Guardians’ efforts to end cattle grazing in the Valles Caldera National Preserve because the group contends that cattle damage the environment and compete with native species.

Cattle and global warming, with 19 reports, tied as the second-most covered environmental sub-issue. Coverage about cattle and global warming increased by one report this period, while its favorability improved three points to a neutral 45 rating. Activists in the media and opinion pieces continued to encourage consumers to reduce or eliminate meat from their diets in order to combat global warming. Letters-to-the-editor increased this period, accounting for more than one-third of cattle and global warming coverage. Meanwhile, in a *New York Times* article, University of Chicago’s Assistant Professor of Geophysical Sciences Gidon Eshel commented, “If Americans were to reduce meat consumption by just 20 percent it would be as if we all switched from a standard sedan – a Camry, say – to the ultraefficient Prius” (Jan. 27).

Vegetarianism

Vegetarianism-related reports again increased in volume this period, from 128 reports in November/December to 158 in January/February. With this increase came a decrease in favorability, from a neutral 45 rating to a solidly unfavorable 36 rating. The leading vegetarianism byline this period was Ivy Manning of the *Oregonian*’s “Vegetarian Flavors” recipe feature. Despite concerns about the HSUS video, nutritional vegetarianism (132 reports, 39 rating) continued to garner more attention than ethical vegetarianism (43 reports, 47 rating). The majority of reports consisted of opinion pieces and letters-to-the-editor.

The HSUS video of conditions in the Hallmark/Westland plant prompted many readers to write letters-to-the-editor either pointing out reasons to go vegetarian or saying the video made them become vegetarian. However, since the

media tended to focus on the regulatory issues involved, these letters were not as prominent as consumers calling for an overhaul of the food safety system. In addition, because the recalled meat was not considered tainted, there were not features on switching to a vegetarian diet, as there have been following *E. coli* outbreaks.

After mixed coverage of vegetarianism and athletes last period, the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* published a feature this period about the Milwaukee Brewers' Prince Fielder, who recently adopted a vegetarian diet. It described the 6-foot, 206-pound first baseman as "a large, imposing figure on the field. He was a home run machine last season, a most valuable player candidate and one of the game's brightest young stars." The article highlighted the fact that he made the change in his diet after reading a book on the treatment of animals in slaughterhouses, after which, Fielder said, "[meat] grossed me out a little bit. It's not a diet thing or anything like that. I don't miss it at all" (Feb. 21).

Conclusions

- Beef safety returned as this period's leading issue due to attention to the Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company controversy, accounting for almost 50 percent of all coverage. The volume of beef safety coverage was more than three times greater than the volume of last period's leading issue.
- Reporting about animal rights increased exponentially this period, driven in large part by coverage of the undercover video shot by HSUS at the Hallmark/Westland Meat Packing Company. Animal rights coverage was the second leading issue among beef industry reporting.
- Beef choices was the second most prominent beef marketing sub-issue of the period. Numerous reports gave favorable attention to the beef industry adapting to evolving attitudes and tastes by offering a greater array of beef choices.
- Environmental coverage continued to be largely driven by reports on the relationship between cattle and wildlife populations. Cattle and global warming, the second-most covered environmental sub-issue, was driven by activists in the media and opinion pieces that continued to encourage consumers to reduce or eliminate meat from their diets in order to combat global warming.