

The real cost of U.S. addiction to cattle

By Simon Worrall, National Geographic

They provide us with beef and milk, the gel coating for pills, soap, ice cream, baseballs, and printing ink. But our dependence on cattle, especially the beef we consume in larger quantities per person than any other country except Argentina and Luxembourg, comes at a cost: industrial feedlots where cattle stand knee-deep in their own feces, pumped full of antibiotics and growth hormones for them; clogged arteries, obesity, and heart attacks for us.

From their home in Seattle, husband-and-wife team Denis Hayes and Gail Boyer Hayes, authors of “Cowed: The Hidden Impact of 93 Million Cows on America’s Health, Economy, Politics, Culture, and Environment”, explain why Julius Caesar feared aurochs; how “ag gag” laws are being used in America to suppress criticism of the meat industry; why a cow called Yvonne became a folk heroine in Germany; and how a ranch in Hawaii offers a sustainable alternative to industrial beef-farming.

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