

Food for thought . . .

A&M researchers attack the world's food problems

Stray dogs proposed for chow in future pet foods

By LIZ NEWLIN
Battalion Staff

Unowned dogs and world hunger, two apparently unrelated problems, caught the reading eyes of a university marketing professor about five years ago. Dr. James U. McNeal wants to know if his modest proposal — using dog flesh as an ingredient in pet and zoo animal foods — is a solution at all.

"I put together enough facts and figures to ask for funds to bring some authorities to campus to see if it's plausible," McNeal says. His request for \$10,000 from a private foundation, a relatively small amount, received an "iffy" answer, so he decided to research and publish an "exploratory study" on the subject.

He and graduate marketing student Bill Griffin found dog flesh is comparable to pork in nutrition and that people are not as opposed to it as they expected.

"We ought to see if we could gather up these unowned dogs and

use them for a processed raw material in the diets of other meat-eating animals — house pets and zoo animals," McNeal says. He emphasizes the process would use unowned dogs, not strays.

Estimates place about 18 million unclaimed dogs in America, mostly living off the land and travelling in packs. These unowned dogs and unclaimed dogs in pounds facing extermination are the subject of McNeal's study, not Fido who jumped the fence for a day.

"The stray is your dog and mine that we lost," McNeal owns a dog, cat, a hermit crab and goldfish.

The other part of the study, interviewing pet owners in a local supermarket, surprised him.

"We found less aversion than we expected — for younger persons and college-educated," he says.

The study, printed in the September 1977 issue of "The Texas Journal of Science," says:

"Aversion to dog flesh as a pet food is not extreme among pet own-

ers. In fact, the aversion to dog flesh among young people holding professional and managerial positions is only slightly higher than the aversion to pork as a pet food.

"Middle-aged women in lower middle class families had higher aversion to dog meat as pet food. In general, the research results...do not indicate that attempting to utilize dogs as a food resource for household pets is a futile task," it says.

If state laws were changed and unowned dogs were used as pet food, McNeal suggests livestock and pet owners would find a safer atmosphere for their animals. Wild dogs occasionally terrorize homes and ranches and injure people. Mayors report unowned dogs are the largest source of complaints in cities. These problems would be reduced by the plan, he says.

The major benefit of the scheme would be to help lessen the world food problem. Grains and meats currently used in pet foods could be contributed to human diets, McNeal says.

By exposing the problems to the scientific community, he says he hopes to encourage a seminar on the topic. So far, the large response to the article has been evenly divided for and against the idea.



Dr. Eugene McNeal's theory on feeding stray dogs as meat animals has become national news.

Other scientists, though, have been almost universally favorable to the seminar if not the plan itself. "It's been everywhere," McNeal says, naming the Boston Globe, Los

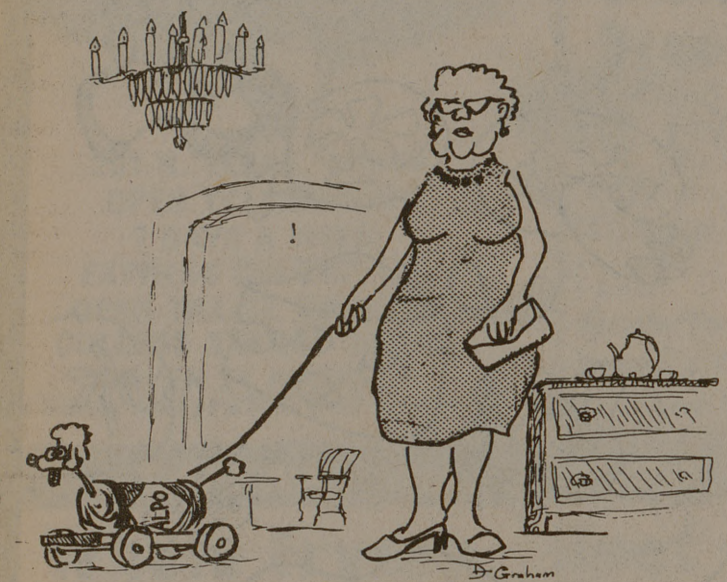
Angeles Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Washington Post and Boston newspapers. He's been interviewed on a Washington, D.C. television news show and locally.

Publicity, he hopes will encourage the foundation to host a seminar.

"I'm so worried the negative journalism could cause that negative vote" to veto a seminar, he says.

But he's not entirely displeased with the public's reaction. "I believe the university community should generate new ideas for society, consider, good or bad."

"I don't have a solution," McNeal says and grins, "but let's find it."



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