

# Researchers seek low cholesterol beef to boost steak sales

LUBBOCK (AP) — Researchers in this stretch of beef country are looking for ways to create "healthy fat" so people concerned about their cholesterol intake can enjoy steak again.

In the cattle-ranching plains surrounding Lubbock, signs exhort people to eat more beef, vegetarians are looked upon with suspicion and cholesterol is considered more of an economic than a health threat.

Many ranchers believe the furor over cholesterol and low-density lipoproteins is overblown and unfairly has harmed their industry. "Seventy-five percent of the people out there can consume cholesterol with no problem," Steve Bartle, a cattle researcher at Texas Tech University said. "It's unfair for 25 percent of the population to dictate everyone else's diet."

Many doctors believe cholesterol and LDLs contribute to heart disease and hardening of the arteries. Although there is no hard scientific proof that reducing one's intake of cholesterol will lessen one's chances of suffering a heart attack, the quarter of the U.S. population with high levels of cholesterol in their blood has been urged to cut down on red meat, including beef.

Instead of fighting the anti-cholesterol and LDL trend, Texas Tech animal science professor Rodney Preston decided to see if it is possible to reduce those apparently harmful components of beef fat.

Preston, director of Tech's Burnett Center for Cattle Research and Instruction, fed whole cottonseed to a few dozen cattle.

Sure enough, the animals' back fat had less cholesterol and LDLs than normal back fat. Instead, the fat contained more stearic acid, which is not considered as harmful.

It was only a preliminary study, but researchers believe it indicated the oil inside the cottonseed altered the composition of the animals' fat so it would be more healthful to eat.

"Using whole cottonseed isn't new," said Bartle, who co-wrote a paper on the study that Preston was delivering at a conference in Japan last week. "The idea of trying to alter the fatty acid composition of animal fat is relatively new."

The study of just a few cattle was not a full-blown experiment with controls and large numbers of cattle, but was designed to see if it would be worthwhile to run such an experiment. "I would say yes, but the question is when," Bartle said.

Preston next wants to analyze the marbling fat on cottonseed-fed cattle to see if it, too, shows a decrease in cholesterol and LDLs. If it does, it could mean good news to beef producers. It also could mean good news for cotton farmers.

# Agency liquidates S&L properties, offers exotic to run-of-mill homes

HOUSTON (AP) — If you're looking for an unfinished luxury home with no utilities but such extras as graffiti declaring "Led Zeppelin Rules," Frank Norris has just the place for you.

Norris and an army of bureaucrats like him are ready to deal. They work for the Resolution Trust Corp., an agency created Aug. 9 when President Bush signed legislation bailing out the savings and loan industry.

Norris, 55, manages Commonwealth Savings Association, a Houston thrift institution with \$1.6 billion in assets and \$600 million in red ink.

Along with others working for the RTC, he's trying to sell thousands of repossessed properties the government is inheriting from as many as 800 failed thrift institutions.

The properties range from run-of-the-mill to the exotic; from apartment buildings, shopping centers and office towers to a windmill farm, a buffalo sperm bank and the entire town of Lehigh Acres, Fla., population 25,000.

No one knows for certain how much it's all worth. The government's own estimate — \$300 billion to \$500 billion — leaves a wide margin for error.

But even at the low end of the range, the RTC, when running at full capacity, will in effect be the largest financial institution in the country, twice as large as Citicorp, the nation's biggest bank.

Already, lawyers, accountants and real estate specialists are swarming, hoping to secure contracts as consultants helping regulators manage and sell the property. Speculators are circling, hoping to buy cheap.

Consumer watchdogs warn the task is so mammoth and so difficult that scandal is inevitable, dwarfing the troubles now plaguing the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Whether or not these dire predictions prove true largely depends on Norris and other federal agents managing 260 of the most deeply insolvent S&Ls already under government control in 33 states.

They are the antithesis of the high-fliers who drove the S&Ls into the red by making fraudulent loans and spending depositors' funds on lavish parties and corporate jets. They drive rented cars, live out of suitcases and eat in cafeterias for lunch.

How well they perform likely will be the critical factor in deciding whether the government successfully completes the S&L bailout without turning to the taxpayers for more money.

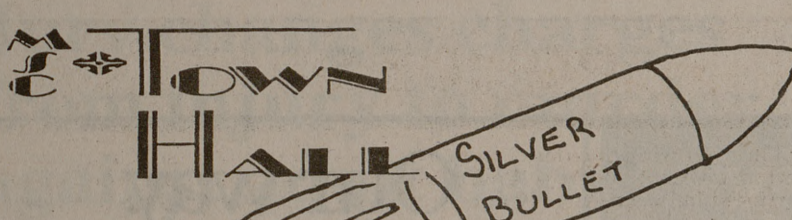
If the RTC sells the property it is inheriting too fast or too cheaply, it could ruin real estate values across the oil-producing regions of the Southwest, further narrowing the taxpayers' chances of recovering part of their contribution to the bailout, estimated at \$1,000 each.

If it keeps the property too long, maintenance and other costs could quickly pile up, offsetting any gain realized by holding out for a higher price.

The problem is that much of it is virtually unsellable at any price.


Commonwealth's contribution to the real estate mess is about \$670 million in repossessed property. Multiply Commonwealth's problems 30-fold to get an idea of the magnitude of the S&L mess in Houston.

Multiply Commonwealth 700-fold to get an appreciation of the problem nationally.



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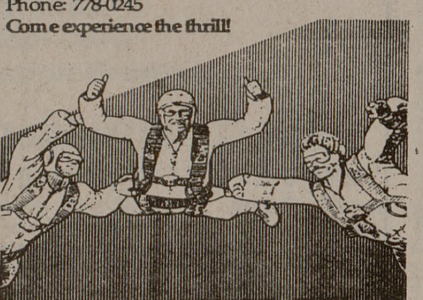
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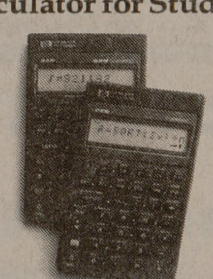
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