

Tattoos still taboo at the office Cattle being cloned to be 'mad cow' free

By Gregory Schmidt
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI — Once in vogue with bikers and sailors, tattoos achieved mainstream popularity a decade ago, adorning the skin of celebrities, models and professional athletes.

Today, one in every 10 Americans has a tattoo, up from one out of a hundred three decades ago, according to the Alliance of Professional Tattooists, a nonprofit educational group based in Annapolis, Md.

"I've tattooed everybody — doctors, city councilmen, police officers," says alliance executive director Dennis Dwyer. He's even tattooed permanent eyebrows on the face of an Arizona state legislator. "It's become more socially acceptable."

Indeed, skin art has crept into the white-collar world of lawyers, accountants and high-powered executives. But how socially acceptable are tattoos in the workplace?

Though times have changed, most office workers still want to be discreet when it comes to their tattoos, Dwyer says.

"They want a certain mystique," he says. "They pick an area they can cover with clothing. Common spots are the back, ankle and deltoid. You can show it with a tank top or a short-sleeved shirt. But the neck and face? I'm not sure our culture is ready for that."

Adam Miller agrees with covering tattoos at work. A 29-year-old creative writer at a downtown Miami law firm, Miller had his left upper forearm inked with a portrait of Edgar Allan Poe while he was a junior at Florida State University. Because of the location of the tattoo, he says, he's never had a problem at work.

"I don't even know that they know I have it," he says. "There aren't a whole lot of situations where anyone at work would see it."

Miller cautions other curious

colleagues against displaying tattoos at work: "That was one thing former FSU President Sandy D'Alemberte said at graduation — don't get a tattoo that will show at your job interview."

Danna Can, however, unintentionally flashed hers, and her boss says it probably helped her land the job.

A 30-year-old public relations account executive at DJS Marketing in Coconut Grove, Can got a tattoo of an angel on her inner ankle when she was 17.

"At the time, it was very cool and edgy," she says. "A lot of women have them, but I'm a professional woman now, and I think it sends the wrong message about who I am."

Her boss, Deborah Scarpa, the owner of the marketing agency, disagrees. She noticed Can's tattoo as Can was leaving after their job interview and says she was impressed.

"I think it's very cool," Scarpa says. "Donna is a very beautiful, elegant woman. The tattoo made me realize she has a lot of diversity to her. I found it intriguing. In the type of business I am in, you don't want someone who's boring. You want someone with an edge."

Can admits hers is "not a conservative industry. When the weather is warm, I wear skirts so you can see it. But I think it's something people judge you on."

While skin art may intrigue some office workers, for others, its time has passed.

Margie Estrada regrets getting her tattoos. A real estate paralegal at Meland Russin and Hellinger in Miami, Estrada got her skin tattooed with a black heart above her ankle, a tear on the left side of her chest and a shooting star on her back in a moment of impulse in December 1999.

"I didn't really discuss it with anyone because they would have talked me out of it," the 33-year-old says. "They were novel for about three months."

She says she's received a couple of negative reactions from co-



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Danna Can, of Miami, Fla., has a cherub tattooed on her ankle. She usually covers it up for work because she thinks it looks unprofessional.

workers and others, including her 7-year-old daughter, and now she wants to get them removed.

"It hasn't exactly been a positive experience having them, and I realize I did it in an impulsive moment," she says. "Had I thought it through, I wouldn't have done it. Now that I've had them a

while, I realize they're not me."

Likewise, Miller won't be adorning his body again.

"I was considering getting a raven, to follow the whole Poe theme," he says. "But it's like sky-diving: I did it once, and I liked it, but I don't think I'll do it again."

By Chris Kahn
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BLACKSBURG, Va. (AP) — Scientists looking for a surefire way to stop mad cow disease are trying to clone cattle that are genetically engineered to resist the deadly brain-wasting illness.

The Biotechnology Industry Organization, a Washington trade group, says at least three research teams are trying to produce clones. One of those, a team in Korea, announced last month the birth of four "mad cow-proof" calves.

At Virginia Tech University, Will Eyestone and William Huckle say they are hoping for success soon, too.

"If all goes well, we're looking to have a cloned cow born later this year or early next year," Eyestone said.

Using such a tricky and expensive method to protect the beef of the future doesn't seem very practical, beef industry and consumer advocates say. Still, there is interest in the effort.

"We're not in support of cloning cattle," said James "Bo" Reagan, of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association in Denver. "But the more knowledge we have on any subject, the better off we'll be on making decisions."

The Food and Drug Administration has not approved beef from cloned cattle or their offspring for food. Even if it does get FDA approval someday, Reagan said ranchers probably wouldn't rush to buy genetically engineered cows. Mad cow disease remains a small threat for American beef, he said, and a herd of genetically engineered animals would cost a fortune.

But if mad cow disease became a serious threat "and we felt like there was a high risk, then yeah — there would be a

lot of people interested," he said.

Jean Halloran, director of the Consumer Policy Institute in New York, said some consumers would be open to the idea of buying cloned meat that's being promoted as "mad cow-proof." But she said doing so seems like overkill.

"This is a profoundly wrong-headed approach to the problem," she said of the cloning research. "Especially when there's a much easier solution, which is that you stop feeding contaminated feed to animals that they weren't meant to have in the first place. Cows are vegetarians."

Eyestone and Huckle said they started working on cloning calves about two years ago in hopes of learning more about prions, the twisted proteins blamed for several types of brain-wasting disease in people and animals.

The rogue prions that cause mad cow disease, formally known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), can withstand ultraviolet light, ionizing radiation, sterilizing temperatures and chemical disinfectants.

As they work through the body, the prions infect normal prion proteins, causing them to misfold and infect other proteins, eventually creating tiny sponge-like holes in the brain. Infected animals wobble and slobber; people with the human form of the disease also lose muscle control and suffer from dementia before dying.

Cattle are thought to get BSE from eating feed that contains prion-contaminated meal made from other cows. Such feed was banned in 1997. Scientists believe people can get the human form of the disease by eating processed beef products containing spinal or nervous system tissue from a BSE-infected cow.

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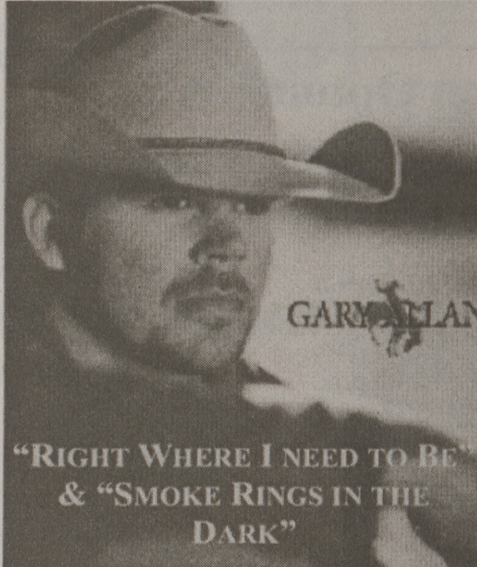


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