

Tell Starbucks to buy better milk!

No artificial hormones in my milk!

When you grab a latte from Starbucks, the milk in that drink likely has a controversial past. Starbucks uses milk from cows that are injected with recombinant bovine growth hormone, also known as rBGH or rBST. RBGH is a genetically-engineered, artificial hormone used to make cows produce more milk.

What's wrong with rBGH?

The hormone is known to cause harm to cows and may pose harm to humans. RBGH increases the rate of udder infections (and other ailments) in cows, which are treated with common antibiotics such as penicillin.ⁱ Increased antibiotic use in food animals is a serious problem because it contributes to the growth of antibiotic resistant bacteria.^{ii, iii}

But that's not all. Injections of rBGH increase another hormone, called IGF-1, in the cow and the cow's milk. Too much IGF-1 in humans is linked with increased rates of colon, breast, and prostate cancer. While it's not clear that rBGH given to cows increases IGF-1 in humans, why take the chance just so dairies can produce more milk?^{iv} While the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the use of rBGH amid controversy in 1993, the hormone is banned in Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and all 25 countries of the European Union.^v



Why Starbucks?

Starbucks is the #1 specialty coffee retailer in the world, with over 10,000 stores worldwide. As the industry leader, it has a huge impact on the marketplace, and markets itself as a socially responsible business. Starbucks notes it "champions... business practices that produce social, environmental and economic benefits for Starbucks communities globally."^{vi} Those practices should include treating cows humanely and providing customers milk produced without genetically-engineered hormones.

Doesn't rBGH-free milk cost more?

Starbucks is in a position to spend a few cents more per gallon of milk. In 2005, its profits were almost \$500 million, and one-year net income growth was 26 percent. In just one year, it sold over \$6 billion worth of goods.^{vii}

Starbucks recently said, "The only way to absolutely ensure rBST-free is to purchase certified organic dairy products. The cost of using only certified organic milk would be signifi-



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cant and lead to higher prices for our customers.”^{viii} This is misleading. Numerous dairy brands, such as Tillamook cheese in 2005, have made their dairy producers pledge to ban rBGH without going organic. Starbucks can afford to take this important step.

Is there enough rBGH-free milk?

Demand breeds supply. In the last several years, due to consumer demand and company ethics, many brands and dairies have pledged to be rBGH-free. Ben & Jerry’s ice cream and Tillamook cheese, one of the largest U.S. cheese companies, both banned the hormone.

Only 22 percent of cows nationwide are injected with rBGH. Starbucks states that “Very few co-ops can assure that their dairy products were rBST-free because milk is co-mingled from a variety of dairies. Moreover, cooperatives vary in their policies regarding rBST.”^{ix} While this is true, it does not justify using rBGH. Starbucks has tremendous purchasing power. Starbucks, like other companies, can require that dairies selling to them stop using rBGH. Starbucks can expand the market for rBGH-free milk as it did for Fair Trade coffee.

What has Starbucks said about rBGH?

In a 2001 letter to the Organic Consumers Association, Starbucks stated “we recognize that some of our consumers have concerns about the presence of rBST in milk products.” The company pledged: “Starbucks will begin to offer rBST-free milk as an option upon request...we expect rBST-free milk alternative will be available in all our company-owned U.S. stores by the end of the summer.” Starbucks went on to say in 2001 that 25 percent of its milk supply is rBST-free and that it is “already discussing with existing suppliers what we can do to ensure the remainder of our supply is rBST-free.”^x

What has happened since 2001?

Not much. Five years later, Starbucks still uses rBGH milk. While it claims to offer organic milk upon request, many stores do not have such an alternative and its availability is not well publicized. Moreover, there is no rBGH-free option for its bottled Frappuccino drinks and ice creams. Even when Starbucks does offer an rBGH-free milk alternative, it charges customers significantly extra. Milk made without genetically-engineered hormones should be the standard, not a luxury item. **Consumers deserve better!**

It’s time for Starbucks to do the right thing. Contact info@starbucks.com or 1-800-235-2883 and ask Starbucks to ban rBGH from its products.

ⁱ North, Rick. “rBGH-free Oregon Campaign Fact Sheet” Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. http://www.oregonpsr.org/csf/rbgh_fact_sheet.doc

ⁱⁱ rBST Internal Review Team “rBST (Nutrilac) “Gaps Analysis” Report” Health Protection Branch, Health Canada. April 21, 1998.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fey Paul, Thomas J. Safranek, Mark E. Rupp, Eileen F. Dunne, Efrain Ribot, Peter C. Iwen, Patricia A. Bradford, Frederick J. Angulo, and Steven H. Hinrichs. “Ceftriaxone-resistant Salmonella infection acquired by a child from cattle.” *New Engl. J. Medicine*. April 27, 2000.

^{iv} Health Care Without Harm “Health Care Without Harm Position Paper on rBGH” <http://www.noharm.org/details.cfm?ID=1104&type=document>

^v North, Rick. *Ibid.*

^{vi} Starbucks, “Company Fact Sheet” February, 2006. http://www.starbucks.com/aboutus/Company_Fact_Sheet_Feb06.pdf

^{vii} Hoovers “Starbucks Corporation: Basic Financial Information,” http://www.hoovers.com/starbucks/—ID_15745,ticker_—/free-co-fin-factsheet.xhtml

^{viii} Starbucks, “Corporate Social Responsibility Fiscal 2005 Annual Report” p. 29. http://www.starbucks.com/aboutus/FY05_CSR_Total.pdf

^{ix} Starbucks, “Corporate Social Responsibility Fiscal 2005 Annual Report” *ibid.*

^x Orin C. Smith, Starbucks President and CEO. “Response letter from Starbucks CEO to organizations coordinating this campaign.” <http://www.organic-consumers.org/Starbucks/ceoresponse.htm> March 16, 2001



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