

Meat, milk from cloned cattle are safe: institute

Kyodo News

A government-run agricultural organization has concluded there is no biological difference in the quality of meat and milk between products from next-generation cloned cows and those from conventionally bred ones, sources said Tuesday.

The conclusion could lead to a lifting of a de facto ban on meat and milk from cloned cows on the domestic market. The findings are contained in a report compiled by the National Institute of Livestock and Grassland Science, which is affiliated with the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry.

The institute, based in Tsukuba, Ibaraki Prefecture, conducted the research on the safety of next-generation cloned cows born through artificial insemination using sperm from cloned cows.

The farm and health ministries will shortly ask the Cabinet Office's Food Safety Commission to evaluate the safety of meat and milk from next-generation cloned cows, which are defined as those born from cows cloned from somatic cells using the sperm of cloned cows, they said.

If the commission endorses the institute's conclusion, the ministries would most likely lift the ban on such products for human consumption, the sources said.

A cow cloned from somatic cells, which has similar genetic characteristics to its parent, can be used to make an identical copy of a cow that produces excellent-quality meat. But many consumer groups have expressed concern about the safety of meat and milk from cloned cows.

In the United States, the Food and Drug

Administration announced in January that meat and milk from cloned animals are as safe for human consumption as products from conventionally bred animals. But the Agriculture Department has urged animal cloning companies to extend a voluntary moratorium on their sale.

No such products have been imported from the U.S.

In Japan, meat and milk from cloned cows are produced at experimental farm facilities on a test basis.

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