

Eating on the Wild Side

Jo Robinson Continues the Hunt for Superior Nutrition From the Ground Up



*It's one thing to believe that cows fed on pasture provide better food than the other kind. Common sense tells you it's true. It's quite another to spend years tracking down dozens, then hundreds of scientific papers proving in complex detail that it is true. That's the quest Jo Robinson set out upon over 15 years ago. It led to a best-selling book, *Pasture Perfect*, as well as a groundbreaking project that developed a program to help women master the food and energy equation. (That led to another book, *When Your Body Gets the Blues*.) Most visible is her ever-useful website, *eatwild.com*, a constantly updated fount of news and resources. From her home on bucolic Vashon Island off Seattle, Robinson has been busy for the past several years on a new book about what really is missing from our food supply. As usual, she devoted herself to exhaustive research of the recent science on the topic and is happy to be in the final rewrite stage; she promises to reveal more detail about the book later this year when publication is imminent. In the meantime, she tells Acres U.S.A. how looking into the Omega-3 deficit led her to become one of the nation's leading authorities on the benefits of grass-feeding livestock.*

— Chris Walters

Jo Robinson

ACRES U.S.A. How did you find yourself on the road to *eatwild.com* and *Pasture Perfect*?

JO ROBINSON. I was researching a book called *The Omega Diet*, which looked at the effects of fatty acids on people's health. I really got immersed in Omega-3 fatty acids — how we're missing them and how important they are. I came across a 1968 study by a British researcher that talked about the fats in wild game, and how they had so much more Omega-3 fatty acids and so much less of this competing fat called Omega-6. Clearly the food we used to eat had to have this healthy fat in it or we wouldn't be here. I asked myself what else is different about wild game alongside what we eat today, and it was difficult to find the information. It took me months. I found out that it's better in a dozen ways. Then my next discovery was that if you feed our modern animals their native diet

of pasture, ruminants in particular, they have a profile similar to wild game. Here was a way to eat meat and dairy and eggs and get the kind of fat and nutrients that are healthy for human beings.

ACRES U.S.A. Was it a eureka moment when you found that original British study?

ROBINSON. Yes. It was by a forward-thinking researcher. Eventually I met him at a conference. I just began to learn more and more about the benefits of keeping animals on their native diet in a natural setting. It's phenomenal, and that's what has kept me going. I didn't intend to go in this direction but I was more or less swept away, since every time I turned a rock over I found another benefit. It's been amazing.

ACRES U.S.A. When did this happen?

ROBINSON. I started looking at animal protocols and Omega-3 about 1995, and I gave my first talk on it in 1999 to a *Stockman Grass Farmer* winter conference. There were 500 people and I was terribly excited about what I had learned, but I really didn't know how these ranchers would respond. They caught fire. It stoked my own fire when these ranchers began seeing how doing something more natural could really improve their annual profit. They could get rid of the middleman, and they wouldn't have to go to the commodity markets with animals they'd raised on pasture. They could keep them at home, take them all the way to market on pasture, and sell them directly to consumers — and that was the answer to many of their prayers.

ACRES U.S.A. How did they respond to the scientific information that you presented them?

ROBINSON. They really didn't know about the high nutritional quality of what they were doing. These were cow-calf operators raising calves and their moms on pasture, then sending them to the market. They were just thinking, "Well, how can we put more weight and fat on these animals to get more money from the commodity market?" All of a sudden they began to see that they had the healthiest meat possible and then they were sending it away to have nutrients stripped away from it. They were thrilled — they really did not know what they had. Nobody did.

ACRES U.S.A. You informed them that they had a premium product?

ROBINSON. Absolutely. And I was the first person to do this, because it took me several years of reading several thousand published studies from around the world to gather the information. It was not collected in any one place before. When I could package it for them and say, "Look, here's how you can market your product if you keep them on the grass," I just started laying it out and they got as excited as I was.

ACRES U.S.A. Could you elaborate on your comment about shipping out the calves to have nutrients removed?

"What I'm saying is if we can't eat wild, we can eat on the wild side. I'm helping people find the modern equivalent of the hunter-gatherer diet in terms of the animal products and the fruits and vegetables."

ROBINSON. All calves are raised on pasture until they go to the feedlots, so all calves start out with this really great health and nutritional profile. It's the moment they hit the feedlot that that starts to change. All of the cattle in this country are great food until it's time to send them off to the confinement operations. But they didn't know they could keep them at home, keep them on grass, create a superlative product and sell it without having to go the commodity market route and get so little per pound of meat.

ACRES U.S.A. How far back did the research you found reach?

ROBINSON. It couldn't go back too far because we've only understood the health benefits of different fatty acids especially Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA) and Transvaccenic Acid (TVA), for a short time. We began to really get it in 1985, so this 1968 paper was way ahead of its time. It was reporting, "here are the differences," but it couldn't go on to say "here's how it benefits human health." We had to learn more about human health and the constitution of meat before we could see the damage we had done with confinement grain feeding.

ACRES U.S.A. And what were the major revelations about the constitution of meat that began to emerge in the middle '80s?

ROBINSON. It was gradual. There were small studies — they often came from countries where they had animals on grass already, like Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, and Argentina. That's how they were raising their animals so they were the first ones to start looking at the health benefits and then gradually American studies started to come out. It was a

trickle for a long time and it still is way under-researched.

ACRES U.S.A. What were the major facts that advanced our understanding?

ROBINSON. Actually the first one was the difference of Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids. The research was showing that ideally we should have about equal amounts of those two fats in our diet, and the American diet, then and now, had from 10 to 20 times the Omega-6 fatty acid. Research showed that Omega-6 fatty acids promote tumor growth, inflammation, autoimmune disorders and that Omega-3 fatty acids had the exact opposite effect. They were both essential fats, but we need to keep them in balance. Animals on grass have this perfect balance — they're about 2 to 2 of Omega-6 to Omega-3 or even less. Throughout evolution we had this meat that was tailor-made for our health, so putting animals back on pasture gets this level back to what is a healthy level for humans. It took a long time to discover the next major fat benefit, which was the 1995 discovery that there was a trans fat in beef raised on pasture called Conjugated Linoleic Acid, CLA. It was looking like it was a potent cancer-fighter in animal studies, reducing cancer growth more effectively at lower levels in the diet than any other natural substance. It was a researcher at Utah State University who discovered that dairy cows on pasture had five times more CLA in their milk, which was so unexpected and exciting that he had to repeat the experiment three times before his bosses would publish it. It took a long time for people to start looking at the difference in antioxidants between grass-fed and grain-fed because we're not used to thinking of meat as being rich in antioxidants. It turns out that grass, compared with dried hay, straw and grain, is

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far higher in vitamin E and beta-carotene and other antioxidants found, and they are passed on to meat. In a way, our understanding of human health had to develop before we could even understand the differences between grass-fed and grain-fed. It's been a slow and gradual process. I didn't even know about CLA when I started this.

ACRES U.S.A. Was CLA simply never discussed seriously in the '80s?

ROBINSON. No, because nobody knew it had health benefits. Also they hadn't been looking for it, because why look for it if it's not important? It's actually a trans-fatty acid, and the public has been led to believe that all trans-fatty acids are bad for you. It turns out it's only the manmade ones. The trans-fatty acids in the products from animals raised on pasture are molecularly different enough that they have different health effects. It's only when we go into the lab and try to replicate them, when we've flipped around a molecule so it doesn't have the same configuration, that we start getting into trouble. That's why transfats are bad for us. They're not like the ones found in nature.

ACRES U.S.A. Did your research lead you back to the essential qualities of grass and soil to figure out where these benefits originated?

ROBINSON. Absolutely. One of my mottos is that if it's in their feed, it's in our food. If it's not in their feed it's not in our food. You have to go back to the food itself. You have to take apart all the nutrients before you can understand how it affects the animals and then our health. I've done extensive research on the differences between the nutrients in young grass, different kinds of grass, grass grown on different kinds of soil and under different kinds of cultivation — organic or non-organic production versus the things we're feeding animals

in the feedlot. That's where you have to begin, with the fresh-grazed pasture that has been the native diet of these animals for millions of years. You start with the soil, you see what comes out of the soil, you look at the varieties of the plants, you see how much of it is conveyed into the animal, what they do with it, and then how much we consume and how it affects our health. You have to consider all of the links to chase them down.

ACRES U.S.A. What do you think of the Mediterranean diet, which came into vogue in the '90s and now seems to enjoy proven status?

ROBINSON. I know a great deal about it because one of my books, *The Omega Diet*, is based on the Mediterranean diet, and was the first one to come out with all the health benefits of this particular way of eating. It was during the research for that book that I learned about Omega-3 fatty acids, which brought me into my animal research.

ACRES U.S.A. When people first noticed the health benefits of the Mediterranean diet, were they looking at the end results without understanding the scientific basis?

ROBINSON. Yes, unfortunately we have messed up our diet to the extent that we really don't know anymore what to eat or which of the nutrients we should get without getting the kind of information that concerns chemists and food scientists. The public really doesn't understand what the Mediterranean diet has to offer, or the fact that there are many Mediterranean diets, some far superior to others. We have made such gigantic, enormous mistakes that you have to be a food scientist to understand what's wrong and where to look for the right food. I understand why the public doesn't know all these details. My job is to understand it myself and then convey it in such a way that it doesn't become oversimplified, but

still allows people to grasp these important nuances.

ACRES U.S.A. Can you cite an example of a misconception or commonplace that might not be accurate?

ROBINSON. There was a study published in 1970 that looked at seven different diets around the world. It was called the Seven Countries Study, and they assumed that it was the olive oil in the Mediterranean diet that made most of the difference. So yes, everybody wolfed down the olive oil, but now we know it's *unfiltered, unrefined* olive oil that has the health benefits. It's not all the stuff you see on the shelf. People are going back to look at that big study, and saying, "You know, it's the people who had the most fruits and vegetables in the Mediterranean diet who were the healthiest of all," and, "Gee, we have to look at the meat" — how the meat was raised. It turns out that in the Mediterranean cultures there are no feedlot animals. They tend to be sheep and goats, very few cattle, and they're raised on browse. People started taking a look at that. What we now know is that they're let out into the surrounding hillsides to forage for themselves, and the milk and cheese that come from them are different. It's the accumulation of these details that tells us about our optimal human diet or leads us in the direction of our optimal human diet.

ACRES U.S.A. Was there a particular country or a particular culture that stood out?

ROBINSON. The best of the best turned out to be the Mediterranean diet of Crete, and this was determined in the Seven Countries Study that looked at the health of aging men, actually middle-aged men — followed them for 15 years, looked at their health, and ranked all the countries in terms of overall health, heart disease and cancer mortality. The men in Crete had far better health and lower mortality rates, especially in terms of heart disease and cancer, than any other country. Including — and this was really eye-opening — Japan, which as people know has a low-fat, very nutritious way of eating. What was it about this diet from Crete, which turned out to have 40 per-

"I'm not one of those who think that eating less meat is good. I think eating less of the wrong kind of meat is very good and very important."

"All of the cattle in this country are great food until it's time to send them off to the confinement operations."

cent fat versus maybe 10 percent fat in the Japanese diet? What on earth made that one superior? People are still working on it, still taking it apart. In the beginning the Cretan diet was pretty much dismissed because it was so out of line with the others that people couldn't explain it. People said, "Oh, it's because they take naps, it's because they have so little stress in their life." The book I wrote, *The Omega Diet*, talks about what made their diet so different and beneficial.

ACRES U.S.A. What was the major factor?

ROBINSON. It's the reliance on fresh, first-press, unrefined olive oil, which is far better for us than even the extra virgin olive oil which everybody thinks is the be-all and end-all. Much of the health benefit is due to the antioxidants which we filter out. This study began in the 1960s, and they were pressing the olive oil and putting their hunks of bread under the siphon as it came out. There were no processing steps involved. Also they ate no or only negligible amounts of grain-fed meat. It turns out that the sheep and the goats had more Omega-3s than even cattle on pasture. The people of Crete ate a lot of cheese, but the cheese was sheep's cheese or goat's cheese, which are more beneficial than cow's milk cheese and they had fruits and vegetables year round. That's another key. The Mediterranean cultures farther to the north had seasonal gardens, so during the winter they did not have this rich year-round supply, and that's turning out to be critical. They're looking at the kinds of the nutrients and the kind of fruits and vegetables the Cretans grow. A lot of the food there is superior to what is grown in other climates. Those are the main characteristics that set the Crete diet apart from the other Mediterranean diets, which are also much healthier than the majority of diets in the world. The people living in Crete also ate a lot less pasta than northern Europeans. They had more stews and sauces and a lot of wild greens. Even today, if you go

to Crete, you'll find people making wild green pies. I've been there and I've seen guys at cafes having heaps of wild greens for lunch, and they're far more nutritious than the ones we grow.

ACRES U.S.A. Have you found evidence of an excess of wheat glutens in the human diet, even going way back into history?

ROBINSON. The optimal human diet, in my view and in the view of a growing number of people, is a hunter-gatherer diet. First of all, it's the diet that we evolved eating. Our current understanding of *Homo sapiens* is that our species has been here about 200,000 years, and that's key to my way of thinking. Until 12,000 years ago we did not have much grain at all, and although certain people have been able to adapt to it, there are people who have not. In addition to Celiac's disease, of which the number of sufferers is growing, there are other genes associated with gluten that have more subtle side effects that researchers can't identify. They can't trace them back to wheat, but they find that when they do remove wheat from the diet people feel better. It was also a world without dairy back then. And of all the fatty acids the ones that are most likely to increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, some of them that aren't in animal foods are in dairy. Of course the meat eaten by hunter-gatherers was extremely lean. People wanted fat, they had to have fat, and they went out of their way to find the fattest wild game they could find, but back then there was no fat in the muscle. You have to be an obese animal before you get fat impregnated in your muscles. There was fat in the belly and they loved it, and fat in the brain and they went for it first, but one carcass would be shared by many different people. This coveted fat also was healthier than what we eat today, that's found in our grain-fed animals. I do think that the hunter/gatherer diet is the way we should go. There's a growing movement, but I'm not presuming that people can go there or are going there.

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What I'm saying is if we can't eat wild, we can eat on the wild side. I'm helping people find the modern equivalent of the hunter-gatherer diet in terms of the animal products and the fruits and vegetables. That's what I've been doing for 13 years now. The animal products were the first, and I stayed immersed in that topic for a long time because of public interest and demand. But I'm always thinking of how you look at the whole plate, so my new work looks at everything else that we eat in addition to animal products.

ACRES U.S.A. Without letting the cat out of the bag, you're finding some nutritional deficits that are more extreme than is commonly thought?

ROBINSON. Yes, profound differences — life and death differences. And this knowledge is so new — we're talking the last 10 years that we've been able to identify these compounds and begin to understand how they affect our health — yet most researchers and food scientists

don't have a clue about what we've done to these phytonutrients, these healthy plant compounds, over 12,000 years. People are fixated on what we've done in the last 100 years with the industrialized or specialized food fiasco. But in truth we've been stripping away nutrients since the first time we planted the first garden and domesticated the first animal, and that's what I get to bring to people.

ACRES U.S.A. Did we do that by mining the soil?

ROBINSON. It wasn't the soil consideration until the 1950s. We were organic up until we got these chemicals and nitrogen-based fertilizers. People had to have good animals on the land to restore soil fertility and have grain crops and put different parts of their garden fallow. In terms of the soil-related mining and stripping that's pretty recent.

ACRES U.S.A. Were we stripping nutrients and phytonutrients and vitality from

our food even back in the 18th century, around the time of the American Revolution?

ROBINSON. We did it by the Roman era. We had learned how to clone plants that were most appealing to us in flavor, like fruit trees, back then. We would wander through, find this wild fruit, and if we found a tree that had very delicious apples or pears or figs or whatever was sweeter and more succulent and larger than anything else, we knew how to take that tree and make a thousand more like it. Unwittingly we stopped the evolution of that plant and chose ones which we now are discovering are the least nutritious of all those we could have chosen. This was a long, long time ago.

ACRES U.S.A. Oops. Mistakes were made.

ROBINSON. Yes, mistakes were made. The underlying problem is that our cleverness and ambition and aggression out-



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weighed our accumulated wisdom. We didn't know what we were doing. We thought we were improving things, and in many ways we did in terms of volume and ease of growing, creating food that needed less preparation. But now we're at this critical moment when our wisdom is beginning to catch up with our cleverness and we can see for the very first time what we did, and when we did it, and how we can start making amends. And I'm talking about the last 15 years.

ACRES U.S.A. Why has this knowledge bloomed during the past decade-plus when people like Sir Albert Howard, the father of organic farming, were inveighing about declining food quality many decades earlier?

ROBINSON. But here's what people have talked about — they talked about how we've wrecked the soil, and how before we had the modern hybrid plants many heirloom plants were higher in specific vitamins and minerals that we've known about only since the 1900s. About how they have more fiber, more protein, those sorts of things — that's been known. What I'm talking about in my next book, however, are things only now being discovered, and the incredible impact they have on human health. That's why this is different, and a lot of these insights started coming in the 1980s and 1990s, and especially in the 21st century.

ACRES U.S.A. Did science catch up rapidly due to technological innovations?

ROBINSON. Oh, yes. You see, not only did we need to begin to understand the benefits of these things, we had to find them, and we're talking about things on the molecular level, and that took the inventions of late 20th and early 21st century science so that we could even begin to identify these compounds.

ACRES U.S.A. What is an example of a pivotal technology?

ROBINSON. We don't even have names for most of them yet. You take the food and you run it through a complicated process, and it will illuminate or reveal these specific compounds in terms of peaks on a chart. "Look at that peak, we don't even know what that is!" Then it becomes, "Okay, we know what this is, we know what lycopene is now, and we know for the last 10 years that we've begun to understand its benefits, and now we know where we can find it, but what are these thousand peaks over here?" We don't even know what they are, but we know enough of them, and the data on their effects on our health is beginning to accumulate.

ACRES U.S.A. How long have you been running your website, eatwild.com?

ROBINSON. It started in 2000.

ACRES U.S.A. How do you avoid the pitfalls of health hysteria and promote a sane discussion? Somebody finds out blueberries are good for you. Then somebody else says no, it's not blueberries, it's pomegranates. The Atkins Diet craze is another

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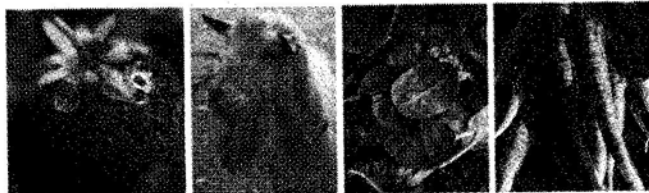
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great example. After many years of this, Americans are extremely confused.

ROBINSON. In all of my work I'm very much science-based. It doesn't mean that I don't look at ethnography and different cures that we've had for a long time. I just want to look at studies and see if they hold up. In this grass-fed business, everything I have said comes from a published study or some other credentialed piece of information, and I've cited the source. You build credibility by not overstating or understating, and by basing what you say on good science. Then over time you build up enough credibility that more and more people pick it up. I've been interviewed by all of the major newspapers, the major magazines, and interviewed on radio. I'm recognized as the go-to person for the good information. I can keep on giving this information more public exposure because it's solidly based. What I'm trying to do is just keep this in people's consciousness and get it to spread — and my goodness, it has! You can have Google tell you when certain words

appear in the press, so I collect instances that "grass-fed" appears in the press, and it's astonishing.

ACRES U.S.A. How would you compare 1997 or 1998 with today?

ROBINSON. It was nothing. At that time grass-fed meat was locker-beef, and it was cheap food. You got it because you wanted to put a lot of meat in the freezer for your family, and it was considered tough and gamey. It was certainly not chi-chi. It wasn't served in top restaurants. It didn't exist. People who raised their own cattle would often keep some animals back for their own family use, but it certainly was not a premium product. In the very beginning, one thing that had to be overcome was the public perception that corn-fed, grain-fed, excessively fatty animals were the best food. Now so many people are recommending grass-fed meat. Nutritionists, major media, blogs everywhere — it's really gratifying. In fact, I really feel that I no longer have to push on this. I think the momentum is there,

and I can happily go off and do my vegetable and fruit research. It's going to keep growing.

ACRES U.S.A. Sometimes laypeople have a hazy understanding of what constitutes a real scientific study, and a vested interest will use fake studies to muddy the waters. Have you run into this often?

ROBINSON. Of course! I could give you examples, but we cannot expect the general public to understand the science in the level of detail that's required to really understand the benefits. It took me many years to begin to understand the papers. Yes, of course they're confused, and they are vulnerable to someone who will just come up with a pseudo-study and spend a lot of money to promote it for political or economic reasons. A good example is the recent study by Stephen Smith, an ArgiLife scientist, that was funded by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. This was a paper released in 2010. It was not even a study, it was not released as a study but as a press release, which was

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really amazing. It jumped over the traditional vetting process that research has to go through of being peer-reviewed and published in a legitimate paper or legitimate magazine.

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ROBINSON. Yes! Just this morning I tried to find if that Smith study has ever come out in a journal and I was not able to find it. That doesn't mean that it's not there, but I could not find it. You're talking about a study that we cannot put any credibility in. Here's what these people did. A Texas A&M professor of meat science took 27 people, and for five weeks, according to the press release, they were fed a 114-gram burger five times a week. Half of them got grass-fed and half of them got grain-fed beef. This is just amazing to me, the gall of what they did. They said we really can't compare apples and oranges here because the grass-fed meat is so lean. Duh! That's one of its benefits! So they added fat to the grass-fed meat until it was equivalent to the amount of fat in grain-fed, and they don't tell where the fat came from. I have no idea where the fat came from. Did it come from grain-fed animals? Did it come from grass-fed animals? What was in that fat? That point alone just makes the whole experiment null and void. It's absurd. Then they didn't control for all the other foods the test subjects were eating. Also, if you only have 27 people you can't get significant results unless you control the heck out of it. This was widely promoted in the media, and people who have reason to be scared about the new appeal of grass-fed meat ran with it. The headline was something like "Grain-fed meat is healthier than grass-fed." And it was by a professor of science at a university. What's the public to think? Of course they think that that's valid. If they only see that one study and they don't understand the rest, they'll say, "Okay, we'll just go back to eating our choice grain-fed commodity meat."

ACRES U.S.A. The long relationship of Texas A&M with the industrial agriculture complex brings up another point. The techniques you decry were intended to not ruin a nation's health but to maxi-

mize food production and take the brute labor out of farming.

ROBINSON. Unfortunately these ag schools created confinement arranged grain-fed/garbage-fed meat production. I gave a talk at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center in Lincoln, Nebraska, another citadel of confinement feeding. There were all these Ph.D. animal diet researchers and I stood up there with my PowerPoint presentation talking about some of the things they feed to animals. One of them is feathers — chicken feathers. I didn't know at the time, but Mr. Chicken Feathers was in the audience. He was the guy who researched this and decided that that was a good source of animal protein. The ag schools, unfortunately, don't see that they have an equal opportunity to make pasture-raised, range-fed food incredibly profitable and delicious and healthful. There's nothing to prevent them from pursuing a new line of research, and it's just their pride and their investment. And then it's over \$70 billion worth of beef sold annually — grass-fed is reaching \$2 billion. Over \$70 billion a year with the feedlot operations, the feed companies, the pharmaceutical and animal vet companies getting a large percentage of their money from there. We have subsidies going to the grain growers so the price to feedlots is below cost. There are huge forces that are leaning against this.

ACRES U.S.A. Are they prevented from going in a new direction by pride of authorship?

ROBINSON. That's right. I don't think people are evil. I don't think they did it so that animals would be stressed and we would have unnatural fats and low antioxidant meat. Also, the science that shows most of the errors are 10, 15, 20 years old. They can't be blamed for thinking that they can just concoct a food ration based on percent protein, fat and fiber alone. That's what they did. They said, "where are we going to get the protein from? How about just taking the beef that's not used in the slaughter process and feeding it to the animals. I mean, good idea! Let's give them energy from stale candy — lots of sugar there and they'll eat it." That's their mentality. It doesn't matter where the

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stuff comes from. The animals have to grow big and fast and fat and they need to survive long enough to be slaughtered. That's it.

ACRES U.S.A. The use of antibiotics in animal confinement operations draws ever closer to becoming a massive public health crisis, but you don't hear people screaming about it. It's almost a suppressed topic.

ROBINSON. It's because you cannot raise a lot of these animals on the diets they feed them in these crowded, stressful confinement conditions and have them survive and thrive. The cattle operators are just scared to death.

ACRES U.S.A. Are they also afraid of giving up growth-promoting chemistry?

ROBINSON. Interestingly, they're willing to give up the hormone implants. We've been listening to a lot of these discussions, and there's a feeling that if everybody gives it up, then it's an equal playing field. If the government said you cannot give these grow-fast hormones to animals anymore, they probably would be relieved as long as nobody can do it. What they're scared to death about is taking away their antibiotics, because then they'd have to change how they're raising animals. Then they'd have to go back to square one — how can we keep these animals healthy in the conditions we've set up for them?

ACRES U.S.A. What is the bottom line answer to that question? Will beef have to be raised on a good deal more land?

ROBINSON. They already know. It's really wonderful that there are countries that have banned it and have found ways to raise chickens, for example, without a lot of these growth promoters and antibiotics and have them survive. They have to do it by lowering the stress level, by improving their diet, by putting them in an environment with better air circulation, and just let them take a few more weeks to grow. The French and the Danish and others in the European Common Market are finding these answers. I know a group of people from the USDA and FDA who actually have gone to Europe to tour some of these places. The idea is beginning to dawn that there are ways to do this and still be profitable.

ACRES U.S.A. Would American meat consumption have to drop significantly if the antibiotics were taken out of the equation, in your view?

ROBINSON. The food would cost more because one of the main things it does is enable a 13-month turnaround on cattle, where it used to take two or three years to raise an animal to the right size for market. Now they can just jump-start these critters, get them out, and get a new batch in. That's been a tremendous way to increase the bottom line. You don't have to feed these animals so long, you just feed them the right things and give them the right drugs. It would cost more.

ACRES U.S.A. Ethical and environmental arguments against eating meat are being made with more force than ever before. What is your view?

ROBINSON. I'm not one of those who think that eating less meat is good. I think eating less of the wrong kind of meat is very good and very important. I think we can have up to 40 percent of our calories from meat, and that's fine as long as it's healthy meat. But we need to look at how we spend our money. This is also a matter of consumer education. We get 15 percent of our calories from sugary sodas. We get 20 percent from snack food. We're spending our money on the stuff that's making us sick, and then meat has to go up in price, and it's "Oh no! I can't afford it." We can afford it. We just have to stop eating out so often, we need to cut down on the junk food, and save our money for things that are good for the animals, the planet and our own health.

ACRES U.S.A. Then a rise in the price of meat would force people to confront what they really value more — eating a good, satisfying protein source, or soda pop.

ROBINSON. Yes. It would raise the price of chicken, pork, poultry, eggs, milk and beef, lamb, bison — all those things would go up — where they should be. This is a hard sell because junk food has been expressly designed to make us eat it and then want to eat more of it. They know how to do this. The chemists know how to do this. We crave it because it was designed to be something we crave.

ACRES U.S.A. It's addictive.

ROBINSON. It is, for a lot of reasons. And it's a cycle. You start eating this high-sugary stuff and your blood sugar goes up, and then it crashes, and then the best way to get it up again is to eat some more sugary stuff. In my new book I'll be talking a lot about the built-in human traits that have really provided the motivating force behind stripping nutrients and adding sugar and fat to our diets. It's *us* — the enemy is *us*. That's an interesting discussion that I'll save for the book.

For more information visit www.eatwild.com. To order Jo Robinson's *Pasture Perfect* visit www.acresusa.com or call 800-355-5313.



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