

Overcoming the “ick” factor key to understanding GMOs

One of the greatest obstacles to technological progress, especially but not only in areas such as food and medicine, has been the sense of “ickiness”: the sense that what we’re doing is in some ill-defined sense against nature, that we’re playing God, messing with things that man shouldn’t.

When Edward Jenner vaccinated people against smallpox using cowpox, there was a widespread outcry, with newspaper cartoons showed patients turning into cows. Genetically modified food is seen as “unnatural”, and a significant minority of people believe that using a fish gene in a tomato will make the tomato taste of fish. The perceived dangers of nuclear power far outstrip the real ones; cloning, embryonic stem-cell research, even blood transfusions and transplants have met opposition from people who think that we ought to leave well alone.

Our sense that species are eternal and fixed, which lies behind our discomfort with genetic modification, flies in the face of the evolutionary reality that they are in constant flux.

Read the full, original story here: [Why I’ve a healthy appetite for stem-cell meat](#)