

'Factory farming' poisons our food and harms animals?

For decades, a [small but influential group](#) of environmentalists and animal rights activists has waged an effective scaremongering campaign against modern agriculture, often pejoratively called “factory farming.” Although the Centers for Disease Control says our food supply has [never been safer](#) and [strict laws](#) regulate how agricultural animals are treated, environmental nonprofits including [Food and Water Watch](#) have not let up.

“Factory farming is an unsustainable method of raising food animals that concentrates large numbers of animals into confined spaces,” the activist group says. “Factory farms are not compatible with a safe and wholesome food supply. It’s time to ban factory farms.”

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Leah Dorman

Bolstered by claims that these “corporate” farms are poisoning meat with [added hormones](#) and fueling the rise of “super bugs” with the [overuse of antibiotics](#), this negative messaging about modern agriculture influences how consumers view food production, with [49 percent of Americans](#) supporting a ban on factory farming, according to a 2017 survey.

Lost in the wake of such heated rhetoric and calls for political action is more sober analysis offered by agricultural scientists, who say that much of what we hear about modern farming from activist groups and the media is wrong. On this episode of the Genetic Literacy Podcast, Ohio-based veterinarian and farmer Leah Dorman joins the GLP’s Cameron English to correct some of the half-truths and outright falsehoods surrounding animal agriculture.

There are certainly examples of abuse and neglect in agriculture, Dorman says, but most farms go to great lengths to care for the animals they raise. Furthermore, new breeding technologies are poised to make even greater improvements in animal welfare possible. CRISPR gene-editing, for instance, may soon allow farmers to raise pigs and cows [resistant to deadly diseases](#) and spare them [painful but often necessary procedures](#) like castration and horn removal.

And while [antibiotics](#) and [hormones](#) are used sparingly in agriculture, neither pose a threat to human health and the meat you buy at the grocery store is safe to feed to your family.

Leah Dorman is the director of food integrity and consumer engagement at Phibro Animal Health. She holds a DVM in veterinary medicine from Ohio State University and has been a veterinarian for more than 20 years. Follow her on Twitter [@AskDrDorman](#) and [visit her website](#).

Cameron J. English is the GLP’s senior agricultural genetics and special projects editor. He is a science writer and podcast host. [BIO](#). Follow him on Twitter [@camjenglish](#)