

Cow clone may have over 100 descendants in Britain

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File photo of six cows produced by US researchers through cloning. A cloned cow whose offspring's meat entered the British food chain may have more than 100 descendants in the country, records suggested Thursday, amid fears about their spread into the food system.

A cloned cow whose offspring's meat entered the British food chain may have more than 100 descendants in the country, records suggested Thursday, amid fears about their spread into the food system.

Three cattle born from the American clone had produced 97 [calves](#), according to details on the website of Holstein UK, the body responsible for registering all pedigree cows and bulls on farms.

The news came after [food](#) safety officials admitted Wednesday that meat from two of the cloned cow's other [offspring](#) had entered the food chain in Britain.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) said that meat from two bulls, Parable and Dundee Paratrooper, "will have been eaten".

The news has fuelled debate in Britain about the ethics and safety of cloning, although experts insist food products from the offspring of cloned animals pose no health risk.

Under European law, foodstuffs produced from cloned animals must pass a safety evaluation and gain authorisation before they are marketed.

The FSA is responsible for authorising "novel foods" such as meat and other products from clones and their offspring and said it had neither granted any such authorisations nor been asked to do so.

Its investigations started earlier this week after a newspaper report that milk from the offspring of a cloned cow had gone on sale to the public.

But as it carried out this investigation, it discovered that meat from Dundee Paratrooper, which was slaughtered in July last year, had entered the [food chain](#).

Local council officials identified its owner as farmer Callum Innes of Auldearn in northern Scotland.

Hours later, it also confirmed that [meat](#) from Parable, which was slaughtered in May this year, was likely to have been eaten.

In the latest development Thursday, records on the Holstein UK website revealed that three cattle born from the US clone had produced 97 calves.

Smiddiehill Paratrooper had 38 offspring, Smiddiehill Perfect had 58, while Smiddiehill Dundee Paradise had one, according to details on the website.

Campaign groups for animal welfare and organic farming have voiced concern over the issue.

Compassion For World Farming highlighted risks to animal welfare posed by cloning, while the Soil Association voiced safety fears and said the use of clones could reduce genetic diversity within agriculture.

But the National Farmers' Union Scotland said there were "no risks" to human health posed by food products from the offspring of cloned animals.

Professor Hugh Pennington, a leading microbiologist at Aberdeen University, said that while the word cloning "has an H. G. Wells ring to it", the process was "perfectly safe".

"They are just the same as their parents from the genetic point of view so there's no problem there," he said.

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