

# Foreword

## Joseph Keon's Whitewash

By John Robbins

I might be one of the last people you would expect to find questioning the value of dairy products for human health. Not that this is an easy question for most people. The assumption that dairy products are wonderful foods prevails throughout our culture with amazing tenacity. But in my family of origin, this assumption was held with a steadfastness that was virtually religious.

There was a reason. My father founded, owned and ran what became the world's largest ice cream company --- Baskin-Robbins. Our house included a commercial-sized freezer with each of the 31 flavors, one for each day of the month. By the time I was 21, my father had manufactured and sold more ice cream than any human being who had ever lived on the planet. And he groomed me, his only son, to succeed him. It was his plan that I would follow in his footsteps.



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So what am I doing writing a foreword for a book titled *Whitewash: The Disturbing Truth About Cow's Milk And Your Health*? It turned out that I didn't follow my father's plan, but instead walked away from the company and the money it represented to become an advocate for a healthy and compassionate way of life. And that brings me to this marvelous book by Joseph Keon. Because if you are looking for the truth about dairy products and your health, if you are wanting to understand what scientific research has actually shown, this book is an immensely helpful resource. I consider it, in fact, the best book yet written on the subject.

One of the intriguing topics Joseph Keon covers thoroughly and clearly is the calcium paradox. Why is it that the countries with the highest consumption of milk and other dairy products, including the United States, also have the highest rates of osteoporosis and bone fractures? Why do so many studies find that increasing calcium intake from dairy products has no positive impact on the body's overall calcium balance? And why do the countries with the lowest consumption of dairy products have the lowest rates of osteoporosis and bone fractures?

Bone health, the scientific literature attests, isn't merely a matter of adequate calcium intake. It is more a matter of how much calcium is retained. Can you imagine trying to fill a bathtub in which the drain isn't plugged? As long as the water is emptying down the drain, turning up the spigot to increase the amount of water entering the tub isn't going to fill it, or at least not for long. Similarly, consuming ever more calcium without addressing the reasons our bodies fail to retain it doesn't lead to bone health.

And there's another problem with our assumptions about dairy products that we need to address if we are going to free ourselves from beliefs that aren't true. In my days at Baskin-Robbins, the walls of every store were adorned with large and beautiful sepia-toned photographs of Guernsey and Jersey dairy cows grazing contentedly in pastures luxuriant with grass. Such is the image many of us still have when we think about where our milk, cheese, yogurt and ice cream come from.

But the reality is very different. With the industrialization of the dairy industry, everything has changed. Many of today's dairy cows never see a blade of grass. They live crowded in dirt feedlots or worse. They are bred, fed, inseminated, and manipulated to a single purpose --- maximum milk production at minimum cost.

Of course, the industry doesn't want you to know this. Profit-seeking creatures, they have no qualms about bamboozling the public with talk of "happy cows."

Peter R. Cheeke is Professor Emeritus of Animal Nutrition at Oregon State University, and has served on the editorial boards of *The Journal of Animal Science* and *Animal Feed Science and Technology*. "One of the best things modern animal agriculture has going for it," he says, "is that most people...haven't a clue how animals are raised and processed... For modern animal agriculture, the less the consumer knows about what's happening, the better."

You don't have to be a vegetarian or an animal rights activist to be appalled by what actually takes place in modern dairies, if you look behind the veil of advertising and other forms of industry propaganda. Modern milk has become, in the words of a contributing editor at *Gourmet* magazine, Anne Mendelson, "the milk of human unkindness."

The natural lifespan of a cow is about 20 years, up to 25 if conditions are favorable. But in today's dairies, the animals are so exhausted and stressed by the conditions in which they are raised that few live to see their sixth birthday.

Everything about the modern milk cow, from her breeding to the food she is given, is determined by what is profitable for the industry. No concern is given to the animal's welfare other than how it affects the bottom line. The industry is proud that the average yield per cow today is two-and-a-half times what it was only 50 years ago. But this extraordinary gain in productivity has come at a great cost to the cows. Modern dairy herds are perennially riddled with many kinds of disease, including painful udder infections called mastitis.

Meanwhile, the small family dairy farm is fast becoming history. As recently as 1970 there were about 650,000 dairy farmers in the U.S. Now there are only a tenth that many. Some dairy farms, housing up to 20,000 cows, are so large they should more accurately be called factories rather than farms.

Modern industrialized cows are fed rations they would never eat in nature, and are confined in conditions that frustrate virtually all of their natural urges. Their calves are taken away at birth, or at most allowed to be with them for 24 hours. Some cows are tied

up all day in stalls. Milked on the spot, they spend their whole lives virtually immobilized. Others are allowed a bit of movement, but only between the barn or dirt feedlot and milking parlor. None ever graze on real pasture while lactating.

Does some of the misery modern cows are forced to endure end up in the cheese, yogurt, ice cream or milk that people consume? Are we unknowingly incorporating the biochemical stress and reactions to pain of these tortured animals?

Whether or not this is so, Joseph Keon has done us all a great service in writing this book. His research is meticulous, his writing is lucid, and his conclusions are reliable. *Whitewash: The Disturbing Truth About Cow's Milk And Your Health* is a doorway through which you can enter into a world of far greater health for yourself and your family. If you heed its messages, your body will thank you for the rest of your life.

And this splendid book is also a key to liberation from the unexamined assumptions about the dairy industry and its products that prevail in our culture. It will free you from beliefs that have attained the status of conventional wisdom but which hold no scientific credibility. Mark Twain died 100 years ago, but he would be as proud of Joseph Keon as I am. "Loyalty to a petrified opinion," he wrote, "never yet broke a chain or freed a human soul."

[John Robbins](#) is a social activist, humanitarian and author of *The New Good Life*, *Healthy at 100*, and *The Food Revolution*.

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