



**TICK  
PROGRAM**

*(Ensure you get regular nutrition news from Tick Program, see pg 2)*

**Iron deficiency is the most common nutrition problem in the world today.**

**Media Release**

30 October 2003

## **To eat or not to eat red meat?**

With the benefits of high protein eating grabbing headlines and the barbecue season upon us, it seems that red meat is once again in favour.

But not that long ago, it received some bad press linking red meat to weight gain, high blood cholesterol and other health-related issues. So, for many people the question still remains - to eat or not to eat red meat.

Consumption patterns for red meat indicate that many Australians, especially women, are opting out. From 1983 to 1996 red meat consumption rapidly declined with intakes for women down 45% and men down 36%.<sup>1</sup>

This is despite the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating recommending we eat red meat 3-4 times per week.<sup>2</sup>

Ms Susan Anderson, National Manager, Tick Program at the Heart Foundation said that red meat is one of the richest sources of iron which is necessary for healthy blood and energy levels, zinc for boosting the immune system and vitamin B12 for the nervous system.

"Meat is also filling, so you don't have to eat large serves which is great news if you're trying to lose weight or maintain a healthy weight," she added.

*But what about the fat content of meat and studies linking it to heart disease?*

A recent CSIRO study involving 100 overweight women investigated the effects of red meat on weight loss and heart disease. Half the women ate a high-protein diet featuring lean red meat while the other half ate a high-carbohydrate diet for 12 weeks.

In regards to heart disease, the CSIRO study found the following cardiovascular disease risk factors improved:

- Triglyceride levels (a fat in the blood) fell by 13% for people on the high protein diet - eating more lean red meat;
- LDL (bad) cholesterol fell by 4.8% overall with no difference between diets;
- HDL (good) cholesterol fell by 7% on both diets.<sup>3</sup>

**Women need almost twice as much iron as men.**

<sup>1</sup> Red Meat and Health Advisory Committee, The role of red meat in healthy Australian diets

<sup>2</sup> Food for Health, Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults, NHMRC 2003

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.csiro.au/proprietaryDocuments/MLArelease.doc>



**Heart Foundation**

## Generally, the redder the meat, the richer it is in iron.

"It is important to remember that for healthy eating, the meat must be lean. A quick way of ensuring you have selected lean or trimmed varieties is to look for cuts of meat displaying the Heart Foundation "Tick" of approval," said Ms Anderson.

"Don't be fooled by the Tick copycats out there. Be sure to look for the words 'Heart Foundation Approved' to ensure you are buying meat that has less fat and less sodium than other meat and has been independently tested by the Heart Foundation."

Recent research conducted by the Heart Foundation concluded that grocery buyers rely heavily on the Heart Foundation's Tick in choosing lean red meat.<sup>4</sup>

"Red meat has come under a lot of scrutiny over the past few years, but it is important to keep in mind that is a very rich source of iron and as part of a balanced diet, it has many health benefits," said Ms Anderson.

### **Iron Fact**

v A CSIRO analysis estimates that 66% of females aged 19-44 years consumed less than 12mg/day of iron, the lower end of the Australian Recommended Dietary Intake.<sup>5</sup>

### **Tick Criteria for Fresh & Frozen Meat**

Fat: 10g/100g or less; Sodium: 120 mg/100g or less; trimmed of all visible selvage fat

**About Susan Anderson** - With more than 13 years experience in clinical and public health nutrition, Susan has a Masters of Public Health from the University of Sydney. Originally from WA, Susan attained a Bachelor of Applied Science (Food and Nutrition) and Graduate Diploma in Dietetics from Curtin University. Susan has been with the National Heart Foundation of Australia for eight years in key nutritional roles.

**About the Tick Program** - Established in Australia in 1989, the "Tick" is the Heart Foundation's guide to help people make healthier food choices quickly and easily. It also encourages food manufacturers and producers to develop or modify food to help improve the nutritional health of Australians and New Zealanders. In general terms, "approved" foods are relatively lower in salt, fat, saturated fat and added sugar and higher in dietary fibre than others in their category. Currently, there are more than 2,000 approved foods in the Tick Program in Australia and New Zealand found across 58 different categories in the supermarket.

**Australians consume 67.7kg of red meat per person per annum**

*Ends*

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<sup>4</sup> Instinct and Reason, for National Heart Foundation of Australia, 2003

<sup>5</sup> Baghurst KI, Record SJ, Leppard P. Red meat consumption in Australia: intakes, nutrient contribution and changes over time. *Austr J Nutr Diet* 2000; 57(4):S1-S36.