

Climate Change and Dairy Cows Kraig Peel, Ph.D.

Right after Al Gore invented the Internet he went on to initiate the idea of global warming and even made a movie and was given the Nobel Peace prize. This effort has continued to evolve over the past 20+ years to get us where we are today. There have been several reports that have been submitted recently that warn the world that if action is not taken today, the earth will cease to exist, as we know it in a few hundred years. Much of this information and catastrophic consequence comes from the concentration of greenhouse gases present in the atmosphere. The scientists like to blame animals and specifically cows as primary contributors.

How much have you read or heard in the news recently about global warming? Not much because the science that was producing the global warming data was heavily scrutinized and found to be lacking credibility. This led to the new term now being used which is climate change. I am certain that climate change is nothing new to this earth. Wasn't there an ice age? That was a pretty significant climate change and my diesel truck or cows had nothing to do with it!

The reader needs to understand how this research is funded. Most of these ideas can be traced back to the origin of the money and how the money is distributed. The United States research funding groups provide more dollars for international research than any other country in the world. Those funds are needed for university researchers to satisfy publish or perish requirements. Most faculty today have a very small teaching appointment and a very large research appointment. The reason for the larger research appointment is because that is how the university makes the bulk of their money. The overhead costs that universities extract from faculty awarded grants ranges from 40%-50%. For every dollar of research funding, the university takes up to half just for providing space and administrative personnel to administer the funds. The faculty member is under intense pressure to acquire research funding as a component of evaluation each year and ultimately toward the assessment of whether tenure is appropriate after 6 years. Why this rant about research funding? Because no one wants the earth to burn up as a result of global warming and it is really easy to convince funding agencies that more research must be done to prevent this horrible end point.

It is in the scientist's best interest to continue to find segments of justification for these continued claims in order to keep the funding mechanism which is primarily the United States government running at full potential. It is important to keep providing. I am only 2 years removed from a tenured faculty position at a land grant university. I participated on 3 very large research grants from USDA that provided funding for us to go to underdeveloped countries and teach farmers how to produce livestock in the face of climate change. These projects were very expensive and we traveled well to get to and reside in the countries for 2 weeks. Often we brought technologies from the U.S. that was not available to them in their country. One African country we worked in had a fully stocked nutrition lab to evaluate feedstuffs and provide feedback to farmers. The problem was that over \$1 million worth of equipment could not be used effectively because they did not have reliable electricity. So the equipment sat under sheets of plastic to only be used in times of

electrical supply. The story was the same in the other countries and often the farmers had become accustomed to receiving things from the U.S. even though they would readily admit that their production methods were the same as they had been for generations and saw no need to change. They did not get the Internet so they often did not even know about climate change.

The truth is that the climate is changing around the world and it always has since the beginning of time. The question is what causes the climate change and has our industrialization played a role in the change. This science is subjective and has followed a path of the researchers ideology in most cases. When bison roamed free across the plains of the United States there were more of these large ruminants producing CO₂ than there are ruminants of all species in the U.S. currently. One of the recent reports from the World Health Organization urges readers of the report that they need to immediately stop eating and drinking animal products if they want to save the planet. There was no mention to stop driving their car or taking a jet to get to a vacation destination.

But yet we continue to be told about the expanding human population and how much more food farmers will need to produce to feed these people but we have to lower the number of animals. Do you see the contradiction? Educate yourself on these topics and do not apologize for raising dairy cows. Tell people to drink more milk and that will improve your bottom line!