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FTC: No Action Needed on PCRM Petitions

WASHINGTON D.C. -- The Federal Trade Commission has formally rejected a request from the animal rights group Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine to act on petitions PCRM has filed since April 1999 regarding the National "got milk?" Milk Mustache Campaign.

Over the past three years, PCRM has repeatedly attacked the basic health claims made in the well-known milk campaign, but has never been able to substantiate those attacks.

PCRM is affiliated with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and has been criticized for promoting PETA's animal rights agenda under the guise of a nutrition organization. In fact, PCRM's views on nutrition have been denounced by the American Medical Association, the National Osteoporosis Foundation, the American Council on Science and Health and other reputable health organizations.

"It has long been known that PCRM and PETA use tactics like filing these FTC petitions to get publicity for their cause," said Kurt Graetzer, CEO of the Milk Processor Education Program (MilkPEP). "It is welcome relief to see FTC put these issues to rest and to cite the strong base of data that supports milk and dairy products in the diet."

In its decision, FTC said it had performed a "thorough review of relevant materials," including recent scientific consensus statements, dietary guidelines and public health recommendations issued by government and other health authorities, including the National Institutes of Health and the National Academy of Sciences.

"In general, the staff's review of materials revealed a strong consensus among public health authorities about the importance of calcium in maintaining bone health and reducing the risk of osteoporosis, with milk and dairy products consistently cited as important sources of calcium," FTC wrote to PCRM.

The review helps put to rest many of the unsupported attacks made by PCRM and PETA against milk and dairy products. In addition to the general importance that milk can play in bone health for all Americans, the review reconfirmed that:

- Osteoporosis and bone health are real issues for African Americans and Hispanic Americans, and these groups should get adequate calcium and vitamin D intake throughout life.
- * Milk consumption is beneficial for bone health for men as well as women, throughout all stages of life.
- * Based on the clinical study that examined dietary approaches to stop hypertension (DASH), lowfat dairy products have been shown to have important benefits in lowering blood pressure when consumed as part of a lowfat diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

In addition, FTC noted PCRM's use of inconclusive research in claiming that milk has any connection with certain specific diseases and health problems. The report notes that "the disease risks raised by PCRM involve areas where the science is still developing and where the evidence of an association is inconclusive." In fact, for some of the diseases cited, such as breast cancer, "milk may have a protective effect."

"We are pleased to see that the FTC has rejected this petition as they realize that PCRM uses inconclusive information in formulating its views on nutrition," said Dr. Greg Miller, Senior Vice President for Nutrition Research at the National Dairy Council. "Dairy products are an important part of a healthy diet, and they may certainly play a role in disease prevention."

Dairy's role in preventing osteoporosis, in strengthening bones and providing calcium, vitamin D and seven other essential nutrients, has long been established and lauded by the nutrition and science community, including the American Dietetic Association, the National Institutes of Health, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and many other reputable health organizations.