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## Your Mail 5-27: Barbecue over baloney

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Memorial Day marked the unofficial start of summer, and with it millions of Americans dusted off their grills for a weekend of marinade, meat, and cookouts. Unfortunately, a few uninvited guests are trying to ruin the party.

Coinciding with Memorial Day weekend, the animal rights group PETA is celebrating "National Vegetarian Week" by offering a vegan starter kit to serve as a guidebook. A look at this vegan how-to guide reveals that the vegan crowd has resorted to sheer propaganda in order to bash burgers. The front page of the guide claims that going vegan will allow you to "fight climate change with your fork." If you believe that, you should also know I have beachfront property in Kansas for sale.

The sentiment that we can fight climate change from the kitchen was also expressed in the 2015 Dietary Guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services. The guidelines claim that diets rich in plant-based foods are associated with lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Peddling environmental policy in a nutrition manual is odd, to say the least, but does this claim hold up? Only if by "lower emissions," it means infinitesimally lower.

A new report authored by CATO Institute scholars found that if all Americans became vegetarians, "the amount of global warming that would be averted works out to 0.01 C (one hundredth of a degree) by the end of the 21st century. Such an inconsequential outcome has no tangible implications." Let that marinate for a moment. Then consider that the USDA recommendations still account for people consuming meat — just less of it — so under its guidelines, the emissions saved would be even less than that miniscule number.

And that's not the only ridiculous claim that vegan proselytizers make. Another common promise is that vegans will live longer and better. While fruits and vegetables are certainly an important part of any diet, so are the nutrients in meat.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics warns that vegetarians and vegans are at risk of vitamin B12 deficiencies. This nutrient is only found naturally in animal products. Humans need vitamin B12 in order to make red blood cells which carry oxygen throughout the body. Symptoms of B12

deficiency include "fatigue, weakness, depression, dementia" to name a few. A vegan diet is explicitly listed as one of the causes of this medical condition.

Dr. Michael Gershon at Columbia University agrees that "vegans are more vulnerable to certain nutritional deficiencies." The health claim made by vegans doesn't make a bacon bit of sense.

Eating "natural" is all the rage these days, so with that in mind we should be thankful our ancestors weren't vegan. Scientists point to early man's consumption of meat as what allowed the human brain to evolve and grow in size over time. Now if only the barbecue haters would use theirs.