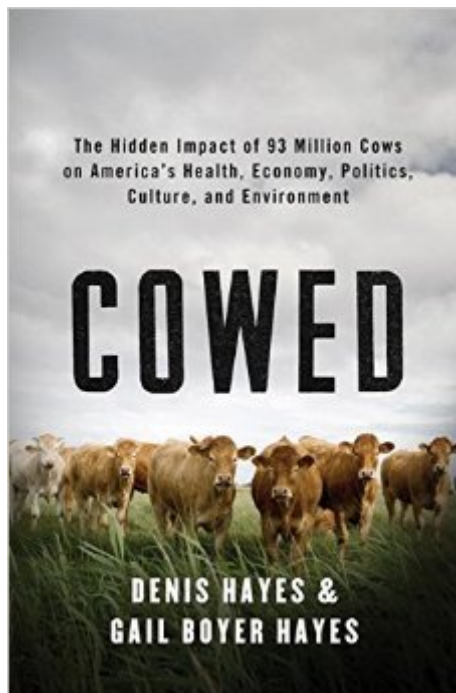


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Cowed: The Hidden Impact Of 93 Million Cows On America's™ Health, Economy, Politics, Culture, And Environment



Synopsis

From leading ecology advocates, a revealing look at our dependence on cows and a passionate appeal for sustainable living. In *Cowed*, globally recognized environmentalists Denis and Gail Boyer Hayes offer a revealing analysis of how our beneficial, centuries-old relationship with bovines has evolved into one that now endangers us. Long ago, cows provided food and labor to settlers taming the wild frontier and helped the loggers, ranchers, and farmers who shaped the country's landscape. Our society is built on the backs of bovines who indelibly stamped our culture, politics, and economics. But our national herd has doubled in size over the past hundred years to 93 million, with devastating consequences for the country's soil and water. Our love affair with dairy and hamburgers doesn't help either: eating one pound of beef produces a greater carbon footprint than burning a gallon of gasoline. Denis and Gail Hayes begin their story by tracing the co-evolution of cows and humans, starting with majestic horned aurochs, before taking us through the birth of today's feedlot farms and the threat of mad cow disease. The authors show how cattle farming today has depleted America's largest aquifer, created festering lagoons of animal waste, and drastically increased methane production. In their quest to find fresh solutions to our bovine problem, the authors take us to farms across the country from Vermont to Washington. They visit worm ranchers who compost cow waste, learn that feeding cows oregano yields surprising benefits, talk to sustainable farmers who care for their cows while contributing to their communities, and point toward a future in which we eat less, but better, beef. In a deeply researched, engagingly personal narrative, Denis and Gail Hayes provide a glimpse into what we can do now to provide a better future for cows, humans, and the world we inhabit. They show how our relationship with cows is part of the story of America itself. 33 illustrations

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Customer Reviews

I've read many books on cows such as Montgomery's *A Cow's life: the surprising history of cattle*, Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation*, and Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma*, so I hesitated to buy yet another book about cows. But I'm so glad I did. Not only is the writing lively and interesting, but much has happened in ranching and dairy cattle operations since I last read about cows. And it's a big picture view that goes way beyond cattle to the ecosystems they affect. So much so that this book review doesn't begin to cover all of the topics in this book. I'm a carnivore, mainly of seafood and chicken, but I eat an occasional steak to keep my husband happy. He grew up in Florida where just about every night was good weather for a BBQ and he loves to sit outdoors and watch birds and other wildlife flit through our back yard while he grills. I have a soft spot for cows after staying on a 200-acre cattle ranch in Belize. The rancher had a name for each of his 100 cattle, and could describe the personality of those we saw as we walked or drove around. We met about a dozen who came up to him for a kind word and a pat on the head. They had sweet dispositions and huge liquid brown eyes that made me fond of them too. I could see how you could come to love them. Towards the end of the first day he confessed he hated to kill them, they were his friends. He made enough money from cashews and other crops so that he could afford not to kill them, perhaps cow fertilizer was the secret of his crop success and that saved their lives. Having felt affection for cattle is made it hard to read the parts of this book that detailed the horrible ways that corporate agriculture still treats cows.

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