



For Immediate Release

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WVMA Opposes Legislation Permitting Sale of Raw Milk in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association strongly opposes Senate Bill 434/Assembly Bill 628 to permit the sale of raw milk in Wisconsin. It is the opinion of the WVMA that only pasteurized milk and milk products should be sold for human consumption.

In order to protect the public health, it is the opinion of the Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association that only pasteurized milk and milk products should be sold for human consumption. This position is shared by multiple public health and agricultural health agencies including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association, NMC (formerly the National Mastitis Council), the American Veterinary Medical Association, the U.S. Animal Health Association, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the National Environmental Health Association, the International Association for Food Protection, and the World Health Organization, and the Wisconsin Division of Public Health.

The simple, yet vitally important process of pasteurization kills bacteria and makes milk safe, protecting both public health and consumer confidence in dairy products.

1. Foodborne disease from bacterial pathogens in unpasteurized milk is not directly proportional to herd health or farm sanitation. That is, pathogens can be present in milk from cows that are healthy-appearing, clean, or grass-fed.
 - The majority of the bacteria linked to disease outbreaks from drinking raw milk are normal inhabitants, or flora, of the environment and gastrointestinal tracts of cattle. These bacteria can be shed in milk and can cause serious disease in humans.
 - Some pathogens, which are not part of the normal flora of cattle, including *Salmonella* Typhimurium and multi-drug resistant *Salmonella* Newport, frequently colonize lactating cows without producing adverse clinical disease in cattle and are shed in milk.
2. Without pasteurization, food-borne pathogens remain in fluid raw milk and cheeses and can cause serious illness in people who consume it.
 - Raw dairy products were directly linked to at least 12 major foodborne outbreaks in the United States in an eight year period from 2000-2008.
 - Clinical diseases reported range from gastroenteritis requiring antibiotic therapy and hospitalization, premature delivery of infants, abortion, and death. The pathogens reported include: *Campylobacter jejuni*, several strains of pathogenic *E. coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and several species of *Salmonella* bacteria.

- Evidence is mounting for a much higher prevalence of *Coxiella burnetii* in unpasteurized bulk tank milk in the United States than previously recognized. *Coxiella burnetii* causes human Q fever, which can result in pneumonia, hepatitis and death.
3. Ongoing surveillance of raw milk reveals the presence of milkborne pathogens and the risk of foodborne disease. Although the occurrence of pathogens in raw milk is not uncommon, actual disease outbreaks attributed to these products in the United States are low because of the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance, which is a document that sets standards for public health and sanitation for Grade A milk.
- It is important to differentiate Grade A milk from Pasteurized Grade A milk. Raw Grade A milk still may contain many pathogens which would be inactivated by the pasteurization process.
 - Requirements for Grade A milk are minimum standards that were established for milk intended for pasteurization. They were not established as standards for milk intended for unpasteurized (raw) consumption.
 - Pasteurization is the critical step required to reduce the pathogen load in Grade A milk making it safer for public sale and consumption.

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