

Minnesota Environmental Health Association (MEHA)

Position Paper: Sale of Distribution of Raw Milk HF 147, SF 255, 2011 Approved by the MEHA Board of Directors, March 2011

Milk is a natural, healthy food, and a dietary source of high quality protein, essential vitamins and minerals, especially calcium. Yet milk in its raw state, from cows, sheep or goats, can also be a source for pathogenic microorganisms including enterotoxigenic *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Campylobacter*, *E coli*, *Listeria*, and *Salmonella*. Most recently in Minnesota (2010), the parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum* in raw milk also caused illness.

Since the institution of milk pasteurization these pathogenic organisms have been eliminated, and the number of outbreaks of illness from milk has decreased significantly. Prior to 1938, milkborne illness accounted for 25 percent of all foodborne illness outbreaks in the US. By the 1950's the number was reduced to less than one percent.

Within the past decade there has been a notable increase in illness from consumption of raw milk, including those in Minnesota:

2000, 8 firefighter trainees in Kittson county contracted <i>Campylobacter</i> from raw milk consumed on a farm
2001, 4 members of a ministry group contracted <i>Campylobacter jejuni</i> from raw milk consumed on a farm
2008, 2 persons at a family reunion in Pope county were ill with <i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
2008, 2 persons in the community were ill with <i>Campylobacter jejuni</i> from a Crow Wing county dairy
2010, 8 persons were confirmed with <i>E. coli</i> 0157 from a multi-county outbreak by consuming raw milk from a dairy
2010, 7 persons were confirmed with <i>Campylobacter jejuni</i> and <i>Cryptosporidium parvum</i> from a multi-county outbreak by consuming raw milk from a dairy

Moreover, from 1998 through 2008, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported 86 outbreaks of illness from raw milk or unpasteurized cheese products. Of the 1676 illnesses, 191 were hospitalized, and two (2) persons died. The CDC further asserts that not all cases are recognized or reported. (CDC—Food Safety and Raw Milk, January 26, 2011.)

The Minnesota Environmental Health Association (MEHA) recognizes and supports milk as a healthy natural food for children and adults. As an organization of public health professionals, MEHA also acknowledges the scientific evidence that raw milk is a source of pathogens that can cause milkborne disease, which is sometimes fatal.

Therefore, MEHA supports legislation that requires pasteurization of milk prior to sale or distribution to the customer; and

MEHA opposes legislation that permits the sale or distribution of raw milk to consumers, including "cow shares," "herd sharing," bartering, exchange or any other action that would allow the consumer to obtain a portion of raw unpasteurized milk from a cow, sheep, or goat.

References:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Food Safety and Raw Milk*, January 26, 2011
National Environmental Health Association Position Paper: *Position Regarding the Sale or Distribution of Raw Milk* 2008
Minnesota Department of Health Epidemiology