



AASRP Raw Milk Guidance

AVMA Policy

The AVMA supports laws requiring pasteurization of fluid nonhuman mammalian milk intended for direct sale or distribution to consumers and opposes laws permitting direct sale or distribution of unpasteurized (raw) milk to consumers. In those states where the sale of raw milk is allowed, these products should be labeled "Not Pasteurized and May Contain Organisms that Cause Disease."

Raw milk can contain organisms that may cause diseases, including but not limited to [brucellosis](#), [campylobacteriosis](#), [coxiellosis](#) (Q fever), [cryptosporidiosis](#), [listeriosis](#), [salmonellosis](#), [tuberculosis](#), and [E. coli](#) infection. These pathogens can be shed directly from the animals or introduced via environmental contamination during the milking and packaging process. These pathogens also can be difficult to detect. Therefore, the AVMA recommends that fluid nonhuman mammalian milk sold or distributed to consumers be pasteurized and all dairy products be produced under a scientifically validated food safety program.

Raw Milk Guidance General

AASRP supports the AVMA policy regarding risks associated with raw milk and raw milk product consumption. However, raw milk and raw milk products are gaining popularity for their perceived health benefits and "natural" qualities. It's important for practitioners and producers to be familiar with the risks associated with these products. Raw milk, which has not been pasteurized or heat-treated, can harbor harmful bacteria, parasites, and pathogens that pose serious health hazards. This guidance document includes general information about the risks involved in consuming raw milk and raw milk products and provides some recommendations to reduce (but not eliminate) these risks.

1. Bacterial Contamination: Raw milk can contain harmful bacteria such as Salmonella, E. coli, Listeria, Brucella spp. and Campylobacter. These pathogens can cause severe foodborne illnesses, resulting in symptoms like diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and in some cases, hospitalization or even death. Pasteurization, a process that involves heating the milk to kill harmful bacteria, is not applied to raw milk, allowing the pathogens to persist and cause disease.



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2. No Safety Net/Inadequate Pathogen Reduction: Unlike pasteurized milk, which undergoes a process that kills harmful bacteria, raw milk products have no safety net. This means that if raw milk is contaminated, these harmful microorganisms are not removed before consumption. Listeria, which may contaminate raw milk, is capable of growing at refrigerator temperatures. Even if the raw milk is stored at refrigerator temperatures, Listeria can grow and produce serious disease in the consumer.

3. Cross-Contamination: Raw milk can contaminate other foods, utensils, and kitchen surfaces. Cross-contamination can lead to the spread of pathogens to other foods, after they have been cooked or processed.

4. Increased Risk for Vulnerable Populations: Certain groups of people are at a higher risk of foodborne illnesses, including pregnant women, young children, the elderly, and individuals with weakened immune systems. Raw milk consumption can be particularly dangerous for these vulnerable populations, as their bodies may struggle to fight off the harmful bacteria found in raw dairy products.

5. Legal and Regulatory Concerns: Regulations surrounding the production and sale of raw milk products vary widely from place to place. In some areas, it may be legal to sell raw milk, while in others, it's prohibited due to health concerns. It's important to be aware of the laws and regulations in your area regarding the purchase and consumption of these products.

Conclusion: While raw milk and raw milk products may appeal to some consumers for their perceived health benefits and taste, it is crucial to be aware of the associated risks. Bacterial contamination, especially from pathogens like Salmonella, Listeria, Campylobacter, Brucella spp. and E. coli, can lead to severe foodborne illnesses, particularly in vulnerable populations. The safety of raw milk and its products cannot be guaranteed. It is advisable for individuals to consider these risks carefully and make informed choices about their dairy consumption. Your health and well-being should always be a top priority when making dietary choices. Choosing pasteurized alternatives and practicing proper food safety measures are key to minimizing the hazards linked to raw milk consumption.





Recommendations:

1. **Choose Pasteurized Products:** Opt for pasteurized milk and milk products, as the pasteurization process effectively kills harmful bacteria without compromising the nutritional value significantly.
2. **Educate Yourself:** Understand the risks associated with consuming raw milk and make informed decisions. Stay updated on the latest health advisories and research findings.
3. **Practice Hygiene:** Strict hygiene practices, including thoroughly washing your hands, reduces the risk of contamination when handling food products.
4. **Avoid Cross-Contamination:** Keep raw milk separate from other foods, and clean all surfaces, utensils, and equipment that come into contact with raw milk to prevent cross-contamination.
5. **Know the Source:** If you're obtaining raw milk directly from a farm, ensure that the farm follows strict hygiene and safety protocols. However, remember that even with careful practices, the risk of contamination cannot be eliminated.
6. **High-Risk Groups:** If you're in a high-risk group, such as children, pregnant women, or individuals with weakened immune systems, it's strongly recommended to avoid consuming raw milk and raw milk products altogether.



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Additional Resources:

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-index.html>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/pdfs/raw-milk-letter-to-states-2014-508c.pdf>
3. <http://nasphv.org/Documents/AnimalContactCompendium2017.pdf>

These guidelines were developed by AASRP in collaboration with the Center for Food Security and Public Health at the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

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