



Public Health
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Benton County Public Health

Benton County Board of Health Policy Statement On the Sale of Raw Milk In Iowa

March 5, 2013

The Benton County Board of Health (BCBOH) has reviewed and discussed the relevant facts on the issue of raw milk sales in Iowa. Subsequent to that review and discussion, the BCBOH unanimously adopted the position which supports the current ban on the sale of raw milk for public consumption. It is the Board's conclusion that the science supports the current practice as sound public health policy which protects and preserves the health of Iowans. While research and scientific evidence is extensive, the reason for the BCBOH's statement may be summarized in the following areas:

- 1) Raw milk poses an inherently elevated risk of disease outbreaks and illnesses due to a variety of pathogens likely to be present in it;**
- 2) The nutritional value of pasteurized milk is essentially identical to that of raw milk; and**
- 3) The claims of protective health properties of raw milk versus pasteurized milk are unfounded.**

Raw milk can become contaminated with a variety of disease-causing pathogens, including *E. coli O157:H7*, *Salmonella*, *Streptococcus spp.*, *Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and *Coxiella burnetti*. These disease agents are capable of causing severe and even life-threatening illness in humans, particularly the very young, the elderly, pregnant women, and those with compromised immune systems. Even under ideal hygienic conditions for the collection and packaging of raw milk, the probability of contamination is high. Pasteurization is the only way to kill the bacteria that can make people very sick. According to the CDC, **raw milk represents less than 1% of all milk consumed in the US, but causes the majority of milk related disease outbreaks. The risk of outbreaks caused by raw milk is at least 150 times greater than the risk of outbreaks caused by pasteurized milk.**

Research has shown that pasteurization does not significantly change the nutritional value of milk. Nutrients that provide substantive value in raw milk (protein, carbohydrates and select vitamins) are present to the same degree in pasteurized milk. There are no health benefits from drinking raw milk that cannot be obtained from drinking pasteurized milk that is free of disease-causing bacteria. Any claims that raw milk has immunological, allergic or structural advantages to pasteurized milk have not been supported by scientific evidence. There are no published peer-reviewed research articles to support the argument that raw milk can cure lactose intolerance, asthma or allergies or that it is more effective in preventing osteoporosis or building immune systems.

Therefore:

The BCBOH supports current law which prohibits the sale of raw milk for public consumption

Benton County Board of Health

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