



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Linn County Public Health**  
501 13th Street NW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52405-3700  
Ph: (319) 892-6000 Fax: (319) 892-6099



Date: January 14, 2013

Re: Policy Statement on the Sale of Raw Milk in Iowa

On behalf of the Linn County Board of Health, I am pleased to provide a letter of support and position statement which supports the current ban on the sale of raw milk for public consumption in Iowa.

The support is based on the following:

1. Raw milk poses an inherently elevated risk of disease outbreaks and illnesses due to the variety of pathogens likely to be present in raw milk.
2. The nutritional value of pasteurized milk is essentially identical to that of raw milk.
3. The claims of protective health properties of raw milk versus pasteurized milk are not scientifically supported or recognized.

Raw milk can contain a variety of disease-causing pathogens, as demonstrated by numerous scientific studies. Raw milk can host various human pathogens, including *E. coli* O157-H7, *Salmonella*, *Streptococcus* spp., *Yersinia enterocolitica*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, and *Coxiella burnetti* to name a few. Even under ideal hygienic conditions for the collection and packaging of raw milk, the probability of contamination is high. 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.

Getting sick from raw milk can mean many days of diarrhea, stomach cramping, and vomiting. Less commonly, it can mean kidney failure, paralysis, chronic disorders, and even death. For example, a person can develop severe or even life-threatening diseases, such as Guillain-Barré syndrome, which can cause paralysis, and hemolytic uremic syndrome, which can result in kidney failure and stroke. Each ill person's symptoms can differ, depending on the type of germ, the amount of contamination, and the person's immune defenses.

While raw milk represents less than 1% of all milk consumed in the US, it is responsible for virtually all milk-related disease outbreaks.

Pasteurization does not significantly degrade the nutritional quality of milk. Extensive research has shown that those nutrients which provide substantive value in raw milk are present to the same degree in pasteurized milk, including vitamin, mineral, and protein constituents.

Claims that immunological, allergic and structural advantages of raw milk are removed during pasteurization are unfounded. There is no reputable science to support the claims that raw milk cures lactose intolerance, asthma or allergies or that it is more effective at preventing osteoporosis or building immune systems.

Raw milk presents no nutritional advantage over pasteurized milk and in fact presents significant potential health risks due to its propensity to harbor and transmit harmful pathogens. These pathogens present elevated risks to children, the elderly, pregnant women, and persons with compromised immune systems. Additionally, outbreaks and illness caused by consumption of unpasteurized milk places an undue monetary and resource burden on the public health and medical system.

Therefore, it is the Board's conclusion that the science supports the current practice of banning the sale of raw milk in Iowa as sound public health policy which protects and preserves the health of Iowans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Murphy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian Murphy, Chair  
Chair, Linn County Board of Health