

Raw Milk Conundrum: Safety vs Rights

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How Dangerous Is Raw Milk?

How A Lawyer Got the Data Everyone Was Looking For—Even Though It Took 10 mos



Certified CDC Data

Foodborne outbreaks associated with unpasteurized milk and cheese often made with unpasteurized milk reported to CDC's National Foodborne Outbreak Surveillance System, 1973-2005 (N=87)

Year	Estimated Total	Food	Ingredient	Pathogen
1980	105	Raw goat milk	Not indicated	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium
1980	22	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Salmonella</i> Dublin
1981	50	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1982	19	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium; <i>Salmonella</i> Infantis
1982	16	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter fetus</i> ; <i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1982	15	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1982	32	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1982	32	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1982	4	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1982	32	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1983	5	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium
1983	57	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1983	4	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1983	5	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1983	6	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1983	11	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1983	2	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1983	16	Raw milk, unpasteurized	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1984	16	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Salmonella</i> Typhimurium
1984	27	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1985	2	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Salmonella</i> Newport
1985	23	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1985	5	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter</i> unknown
1988	120	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1989	10	Raw goats milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1990	42	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter jejuni</i>
1990	13	Raw milk	Not indicated	<i>Campylobacter</i> unknown
1990	5	Raw milk	Not indicated	Suspect <i>Escherichia coli</i> O157:H7

Various Sources Generally Agree

- # 1,791 illnesses over 33 years (1973-2005), CDC data provided from Pete Kennedy FOIA request (average 54/year)
 - # 1,570 illnesses over 17 years (1990-2006), Centers for Science and the Public Interest (average 92/year) that is what is at stake.
 - # 1,733 illnesses over 20 years (1973-92) from 21 states, American Journal of Public Health 1998 review (average 86/year)
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Is This a Public Health Crisis?

- # Allowing for unreported cases—multiplier effect of 20
 - # Less than 2,000 illnesses per year on average
 - # At least since 1980s, no indication of deaths in any of this data (in contrast to pasteurized milk)
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So What's the Problem?

It's About the Kids...and Fear



Public Health Response

Stonewall (This is John Sheehan at NCIMS)



Zero Tolerance, Despite Weird Evidence

Chuck Phippen—Shut 4 Times for Phantom Listeria



Questionable Enforcement

Ag Dept “Undercover Agents” in PA



Tough Prosecution

- # Federal Judge on Prosecution of Anita & Michael Puckett: “I Just Don’t Get It.”



Conclusion: Why a Conundrum?

- # Cast as a safety problem, but treated as a political problem
 - # Safety problems dealt with by education.
 - # Political problems are dealt with by intimidation and setting examples.
 - # Biggest risk: create black market, with much bigger public health problem.
 - # One way or another, rights will prevail.
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