

Allison Gervais
Raw milk laws persuasive

Hello,

My name is Allison Gervais and I am a Junior from Enosburg Falls High School. I come from a dairy farming background. My father, grandfather and great-grandparents were all dairy farmers. With my family's experience in the dairy industry, it has become apparent to us that raw milk should not be sold to the general public. Some potentially harmful bacteria in raw milk can cause numerous negative health issues or even death. Taking the unnecessary risk of drinking raw milk is like driving blindfolded without a seatbelt and hoping you don't get in an accident. Drinking unpasteurized milk is a risk you don't need to take. The simple solution is pasteurization. Pasteurization has been scientifically proven to kill all bacteria harmful to humans, making it completely safe to drink.

My grandparents family, including my dad, grew up drinking raw milk from their cows. They were only mildly aware of the potential risks. When I was just two years old I became seriously ill. Days passed and I wasn't getting better so they decided to conduct further tests. The tests concluded that I had campylobacter bacteria. Although my mother always gave me pasteurized milk, my grandmother had given me raw milk several times. Doctors traced the bacteria to raw milk consumption. I was very sick for a couple weeks but was able to fully recover. However, in many instances the bacteria can become deadly. Pasteurization gets rid of those harmful bacteria.

Vermont is one of the highest producing states of milk per person in the US. Over 85% of this milk is sold out of state. Dairy sales are the largest source of outside income coming into Vermont. With milk as such an important aspect of Vermont's economy, we

can't allow the image of our high quality milk to be tarnished by the negative publicity of potential illness caused by raw milk. If people hear of sickness or death occurring in Vermont from milk, they may be less likely to purchase our milk.

Groups such as the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention also known as CDC agrees with the Vermont Department of Health and Vermont Agency of Agriculture Foods and Markets and want the public to know that "Raw milk is not a safe food product." The Food and Drug Administration(FDA) and the American Academy of Pediatrics agree that there are many harmful bacteria that could be in raw milk. A few include salmonella, E. coli, campylobacter and listeria. The people most at risk are infants, young children, elderly and the sick.

Some people may encourage consumption of raw milk because they think pasteurization takes out important nutrients. The Vermont Department of Health and CDC websites counter that claim by stating, the pasteurization does slightly decrease the availability of vitamins and minerals in milk but milk is not a major contributor of those substances in the human diet anyway so the loss is minimal. Pasteurized milk still contributes large amounts of calcium, choline and potassium. Vitamin D is also added when milk is pasteurized. There is a movement in Vermont to buy local which many people like the idea of; however the risk of buying raw milk without having it tested or pasteurized is simply too high to justify consumption. A lot of people have the notion that since they've been drinking raw milk their whole lives without any problems that they can continue to do so and won't get sick. They need to remember the risk they're taking every time they drink unpasteurized milk.

Is consuming raw milk really worth the perceived benefits when they come with such harsh and deadly risks? Why take these risks when they can be easily avoided? By making it illegal to sell raw milk, we would keep the unknowing public from the potential risks associated with unpasteurized milk.

Banning raw milk will allow Vermonters to avoid a negative view of dairy, avoid potential economic downfall, avoid unnecessary risk of illness and death, while still being able to enjoy the health benefits and nutrients milk provides. Supporting my thoughts on banning the sale of raw milk will allow you to take off your blindfold, put on your seatbelt and enjoy the ride.

Sources:

"U.S. Food and Drug Administration." The Dangers of Raw Milk: Unpasteurized Milk Can Pose a Serious Health Risk. N.p., 19 June 2014. Web. 02 Mar. 2015.

"Raw Milk." Raw_milk. Vermont Department of Health, 2015. Web. 13 Mar. 2015.