

Marjorie Urie

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H-426

I would like to thank the Vermont House Agriculture committee for the opportunity to testify regarding H-426.

Allow me to introduce myself. Marjorie Urie, I live in Greensboro, Vermont. Together with my husband, Brett, we own and operate a 180 milking head dairy farm. We are members of the St. Albans Cooperative Creamery and have been for 22 years. We raise our replacement heifers, steers for commercial sale, and we produce and age raw milk cheese in our on-site facilities. We have been licensed by the State of Vermont to do all three.

As both a commercial dairy farmer selling fluid milk and a small artisan cheese producer making raw milk cheese, I fully oppose the legislation of H-426. There are three main concerns I see regarding increasing the unregulated retail sales of raw milk.

1. Lack of plant/farm regulation and milk testing.
2. Packaging.
3. Transportation.

1. Vermont dairy producers work diligently to adhere to the stringent rules and regulations as stated by the USDA that must be followed to make safe, high quality dairy products. All fluid milk available for public consumption is subject to extensive testing for bacteria, shelf-life, and antibiotics. Any milk not meeting these requirements is discarded. We have strict inspections and licensing requirements that must be adhered to daily, failure to comply with the requirements ends in exclusion from the market. These regulations are in place for several reasons, most importantly to ensure that the dairy foods available to the consumer are completely safe for consumption. Please refer to VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND MARKETS DAIRY FARM INSPECTION REPORT. Every aspect of a dairy farm's operation is closely scrutinized to ensure that the operation producing milk is CLEAN. Dairy farms in Vermont are inspected twice annually.

Required testing on raw/farm milk before processing includes DMC and a wide span antibiotics test. Additional testing done by bottlers include SCC, PI, SPC, and LPC. Each one of these tests work together to ensure that milk bottled for the consumer is completely safe.

DMC-direct microscopic count-plates bacteria found

SCC-somatic cell count which indicates udder health and potential mastitis

PI-preliminary incubation-identifies improper cooling, dirty equipment, machine fall off, or a contaminated water supply

SPC-standard plate count of raw milk-identifies inadequate cleaning of milking equipment and non-cip system components, and inadequate cooling. This is commonly known as the raw count.

LPC-lab pasteurized count-identifies that milk has been in contact with dirty equipment

H-426 does not require these tests to be performed on a daily basis. If there is a high count, the farmer will not know that the milk they are selling contains high levels of very dangerous bacteria, thus turning that beautiful wholesome milk into a huge health risk, especially to children, elderly, and anyone with a compromised immune system. These milk tests that dairy farmers and cheesemakers alike are subject to identify where a potential problem exists and therefore can be corrected immediately.

2. Milk sold on the commodity market is transported at 40 degrees or less, processed, and packaged in a licensed inspected plant. Packaging used to sell dairy foods is designed for one time use and not meant to be cleaned and reused for food use. Although reused bottles may be desirable, who will be responsible for over-seeing the container cleaning and sanitation between uses? Without regular inspections, there is no guarantee that the best cleaning practices are in place. Improperly cleaned food production equipment is often at the root of food borne illness.

Please refer to VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND MARKETS, MONTPELIER VERMONT MILK PLANT INSPECTION REPORT

This is a sample plant inspection report. Every plant in Vermont has to adhere to these regulations. Numbers 18 and 19 are specific to packaging, bottling, and capping. It is not only completely unfair to lessen these requirements in any way for the producers that built their facilities by the "book" and operate their facilities by the "rules", but it puts the consumer at risk. Licensed plants are inspected by the State of Vermont currently twice a year, moving to 4 inspections per year beginning no later than September 2015. Water supplies are tested every 6 months for coliform.

3. The Pasteurized Milk Ordinance(PMO) section 10 requires that milk must be kept at 45 degrees or less during transportation. When loading and transporting milk to a CSA or a Farmer's Market, who will be overseeing that the milk meets these requirements during the summer season? Number 17 on MPIR is temperature specific.

Bottling plants in Vermont are inspected every 3 months, subject to a Federal Rating every 2 years with a Federal Check Rating to follow. Pasteurizer timer check is every 6 months by State of Vermont, equipment is checked every 3 months.

The PMO clearly states in section 9 that sale of unpasteurized milk is prohibited to the final consumer.

In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for listening, and taking the time to become truly educated regarding the unregulated production and sales of raw milk in Vermont.

Milk is a beautiful food, truly beautiful , milk has the amazing chemistry to become so many other delicious foods we love, sour cream, yogurt, cottage cheese, butter, ice cream, and of course, countless varieties of cheese. Milk has been feeding the masses for centuries. In the last century the Scientific Method has assured that the dairy foods available for consumer consumption are unequivocally safe. Without having regulations and safeguards regarding the retail sale of retail raw milk, we will be opening a Pandora's Box.

Thank-you again.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marjorie Urie