

81 Town Common Rd South  
Georgia Center, Vermont 05478

May 12, 2019

Vermont House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture and Forestry  
Representative Carolyn Partridge, Chair  
Representative Rodney Graham, Vice Chair  
Representative John Bartholomew, Clerk  
Representative Thomas Bock  
Representative Charen Fegard  
Representative Terry Norris  
Representative John O'Brien  
Representative Vicki Strong

Dear Representatives,

Please do not vote to approve the sale of unpasteurized milk at farmer's markets and other retail outlets in Vermont; and do not approve reduction of the labelling requirements on raw milk products.

As a brief introduction, I am writing as a recently retired dairy-exclusive veterinarian who served a wide variety of dairy farm styles in northwestern Vermont for 43 years. For the past ten years, I have followed the Veterinarian Oath to use my scientific knowledge to protect the public health, which has led me to testify and write against legislation that allows the relaxation of Vermont standards regarding the sale of raw milk.

At the recent Northern Tier Dairy Summit, it was gratifying to see the House Agriculture committee's attendance and support for the troubled Vermont dairy industry. As House Ag and VAAFMM work to improve the financial environment for Vermont farms, please consider the devastating impact that a food borne illness outbreak in Vermont stemming from raw milk purchased at a farmer's market or retail outlet or sold to a consumer with a compromised immune status would have on the public image of the Vermont Brand. A food borne illness outbreak from unpasteurized milk consumption would not be differentiated by the public from pasteurized products and would lead to further deterioration of an already suffering dairy market.

For reference, I have attached a CDC article on Emerging Infectious Diseases which finds that as states relaxed unpasteurized milk standards over a six year period, that food borne illness cases from dairy products have gone up four fold (3.3 outbreaks vs. 13.5 outbreaks) in a six year period. With this national trend, it cannot be said that a food borne illness is not likely in Vermont. Especially considering the poor record of compliance by current Vermont raw milk producers (as evidenced by low rabies vaccinations and Brucella and TB testing at my former dairy exclusive veterinary practice) with recently relaxed standards and the limited personnel

resources of VAAFMM to enforce current standards, it is not a good time to expand the sales to farmers' markets and retail outlets.

Pasteurization has proven to be an effective barrier against many pathogens from expected and unexpected sources. Two recent widespread interstate outbreaks from unpasteurized milk are from a bacteria used in vaccine which can only be administered by licensed veterinarians, RB1 Brucella. This highly unlikely source would not have survived normal pasteurization and shows the value of the protection from unanticipated disease sources.

In closing, please do not act on reducing label requirements or allowing unpasteurized milk sales at farmers' markets or retail outlets during the legislative session. Please allow for more extensive testimony on this subject.

Thank you,

Dr. Kent E Henderson

Northwest Veterinary Associates, Inc. (retired)

VVMA Government Relations Committee