



UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Releases

Tuesday, August 26, 2014

Outbreak of Illness Associated with Drinking Raw Milk

(Salt Lake City) – Utah public health officials are investigating a cluster of illness associated with the consumption of raw or unpasteurized milk. To date, 45 cases of Campylobacter infection have been reported in people who indicated that they consumed raw milk in the week before illness began. Cases have been reported from: Cache, Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake, Utah and Weber counties. Two cases occurred in out of state residents from California and Idaho. Onset dates range from May 9, 2014 to July 21, 2014. The cases range in age from two to 74 years.

All 45 cases are linked to the consumption of raw milk or cream purchased at Ropelato Dairy in Weber County. Utah Department of Agriculture and Food inspectors suspended the dairy's license to sell raw milk on August 4, 2014, after several tests of raw milk samples taken at the farm were positive for Campylobacter.

According to Larry Lewis, Public Information Officer, Utah Department of Agriculture and Food, "Inspectors have repeatedly visited the dairy, reviewing safety procedures, working with the owner to determine the source of the problem and helping devise corrective actions."

The dairy has been very cooperative in working with the inspectors, and will be allowed to resume raw milk sales as soon as the milk consistently passes safety tests.

Campylobacteriosis is a bacterial infection that causes diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, headache, nausea and vomiting. Illness can last for up to a week or more and can be serious, especially for young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those who have weakened or compromised immune systems. UDOH Epidemiologist, Kenneth Davis adds, "In some severe cases, illness can lead to complications, including paralysis and death. If you have recently consumed raw milk and are experiencing any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider."

Raw milk is from cows, goats or sheep that has not been pasteurized to kill harmful bacteria. This raw, unpasteurized milk can contain dangerous bacteria such as Campylobacter, Salmonella, Listeria, and E. coli, which are responsible for causing foodborne illness. Other products that contain raw milk, such as cream or queso fresco, can also cause foodborne illness.

Raw milk contaminated with disease-causing bacteria does not smell or look any different from uncontaminated raw milk, and there is no easy way for the consumer to know whether the raw milk is contaminated.

Since 2009, there have been 14 documented outbreaks of Campylobacter infection associated with raw milk consumption in Utah, with more than 200 people becoming ill. In response, public health officials again warn that drinking raw milk may be dangerous. They suggest taking the following steps to avoid illness when purchasing and/or consuming raw milk (or raw milk products):

- Purchase raw milk only from those stores or dairies permitted by law to sell it. However, a government permit does not guarantee that the raw milk (or raw milk product) will be free from disease-causing bacteria.
- Keep raw milk and raw milk products refrigerated at or below 40°F. Do not let raw milk sit out at room temperature.

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