Raw drinking milk

Advice on drinking raw milk and the safety regulations in place concerning its sale.

The majority of the milk we drink in the UK is heat-treated to kill off harmful bacteria. Raw milk isn’t – it goes straight from the cow to the bottle. Relatively few people buy and drink raw milk.

Raw drinking milk may come from:

- cows
- sheep
- goats
- buffaloes

Our advice on raw drinking milk and cream

We advise that raw or unpasteurised milk and cream may contain harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. People with a weaker immune system are particularly vulnerable to food poisoning and should not consume it.

These include:

- pregnant women
- infants and small children
- elderly people
- people with compromised immune system such as cancer patients

Raw drinking milk and the law

The sale of raw drinking milk and cream is legal in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It can only be sold directly to the consumer by:

- registered milk production farms at the farm gate or farmhouse catering operation
- farmers at farmers’ markets
- distributors using a vehicle as a shop such as a milk round
- direct online sales
- vending machines at the farm

It’s illegal to sell raw milk and cream in any other setting. Sales of raw milk and cream are completely banned in Scotland.

How we’re protecting people who choose to drink raw milk

Hygiene regulations are in place to protect consumers. Raw drinking milk offered for sale must be:

- from a herd that is healthy and free from brucellosis and tuberculosis
- from a farm that complies with hygiene rules and is inspected twice a year
- labelled with the appropriate health warning
- sampled and tested four times a year by dairy hygiene inspectors to make sure it meets...
food safety standards

We regularly review the controls on raw drinking milk and cream. We want to support consumer choice but have to balance this alongside protecting the health of the public.