

Food Standards Agency tighten controls on production of raw drinking milk

The FSA has worked closely with the Raw Milk Producers Association (RMPA) and other key stakeholders to reduce the health risks associated with raw drinking milk.

The [raw drinking milk guidance document](#) has been developed in response to an increase in raw drinking milk sales in recent years, alongside an increase in outbreaks of illness related to this product.

Raw drinking milk is not pasteurised, the process that kills off harmful bacteria. Instead, it goes straight from the animal to the bottle.

The guidance outlines the safety measures raw drinking milk producers must follow. They are legally required to devise and implement a safety system which assesses the things that could go wrong to affect the safety of their product and identifies controls to stop that from happening.

The FSA also expects producers to adopt recommended periodic testing for specified pathogens and indicators of poor hygiene and disease which can be found in milk. FSA Dairy Hygiene Inspectors visit farms producing raw drinking milk on a six-monthly basis to check whether adequate procedures are in place.

Michael Wight, Head of Food Safety Policy at the FSA, said:

“Raw drinking milk has a loyal following but is an inherently risky product because the way it’s produced increases the possibility of it containing harmful food poisoning bacteria. It’s important to strike the right balance between protecting public health, preserving consumer choice and supporting responsible business. Food businesses must follow the measures set out in this guidance in order to reduce the health risk to consumers from this product.

“The FSA will continue to monitor any health incidents associated with raw drinking milk to see if these measures are sufficient.”

FSA advice remains that pregnant women, infants and small children, elderly people, and those with weaker immune systems caused by health problems should not consume raw drinking milk.

Assessment of the evidence considered by the FSA concludes that the risk is not so unacceptable as to justify removing the right of adult consumers to choose to drink it. There is an expectation that responsible raw drinking milk producers will wish to enact these measures that are designed to ensure production standards are as high as possible to protect public health and consumer choice.

Tali Eichner, Membership Secretary of the Raw Milk Producers Association (RMPA), said:

“We are pleased to have been engaged in constructive dialogue with the FSA throughout the process of refining the new controls, aiming to ensure they are both practical for producers and focussed on improving food safety.

“The approach proposed by the FSA meets this need by enabling the producer to assess the risks in their own system and setting controls appropriate to their individual situation.”

The guidance, which will be applied from 1 April 2020, does not extend to dairy products made using raw drinking milk.

Existing legislation places the responsibility on producers to ensure that their milk does not present a health risk to consumers, and that they have identified and managed all relevant risks. Failure to implement an adequate FSMS could result in enforcement action being taken against a producer.

The FSA advises consumers to only purchase raw milk from registered producers. An [FSA Explains' raw drinking milk video and further information](#) is available on our website.