

AB 2505 (Yamada)

Home Dairy Farm Raw Milk Safety Act

SUMMARY

AB 2505 defines a home dairy farm as having no more than three lactating cows or no more than 15 lactating goats on the premises and incorporates these small scale raw milk producers into critical safety and sanitation standards. AB 2505's safety and sanitation standards for home dairy farms include having their animals tested and found non-reactive to annual tuberculin and brucellosis testing, maintaining strict milk temperatures, and strict bacterial limits; the same standards required for Grade A raw market milk.

BACKGROUND

Raw milk is milk that has not been pasteurized (heat treated). Farm families have been choosing to drink raw milk from their cows, goats or other lactating mammals for decades, and have traditionally shared extra milk with neighbors and friends. Thirty three states have set varying standards to allow for some form of sale of raw cow or goat milk, including California.

In California, any farm that produces milk for sale and has more than two cows or six goats in lactation qualify as dairy farms, and only dairy farms with permits are approved to sell milk in California. These dairy farms produce milk to be pasteurized for retail sale or processing at creameries and cheese plants as well as produce milk intended for sale to consumers in its raw form. Raw milk that is produced for direct human consumption must be tested at inspection facilities to determine weight and fat percentage, produced in a milk house or milk room, and graded by a milk inspection service. There are no national regulations for human consumption of raw milk.

NEED FOR THE BILL

An estimated 1,000 home dairy farm families with a few cows or goats have no recourse under California law to offer their excess raw milk to anyone, even though it never touches retail markets or farmers markets. A market exists for raw milk as individuals throughout California choose to drink raw milk for taste, access, or health reasons, and prefer to purchase it fresh from a neighbor as they might do with eggs from family chickens or produce from family gardens rather than purchase them from a retail store. Currently, a dairy farm has to obtain a permit, build special infrastructure such as milking rooms and pay for regular farm inspection fees, animal health inspection fees and grading of the milk and fat content measuring. These cost prohibitive requirements prevent families with a few cows from being able to share their milk legally. AB 2505 will provide California's small family farms a legal method for putting their milk to use instead of throwing it away. The base standards created by the bill, including on-farm, direct sales only; sanitary and safe environments; bottle neck ties with the home dairy farm's information and raw milk warning labels; adherence to Grade A market milk bacterial content standards; equipment sanitization; and annual animal disease testing, will support California's small family farms while still protecting public health.

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