

Kelli Foreman

Currently Alaska celebrates a robust herd share program that encourages farm to consumer relationships and puts the responsibility on those shoulders. Alaska has celebrated the start up of two new Grade A Certified dairies in the past three years which is unprecedented in agriculture today. It clearly shows Grade A standards are attainable and our State Vet office is fully qualified to help those interested to achieve this standard.

I believe the current lack of oversight to the proposed raw milk addition threatens to dismantle the healthy milk standard Alaska has carefully constructed for its milk industry. This new addition provides no oversight to insure antibiotic free milk. This becomes vitally important if someone with a life threatening allergy unknowingly drinks the "unadulterated milk". Milk is extremely nutrient dense and an excellent place for bacteria to grow. From the second the milk leaves the animal, it is a race against the clock. Each step is vital to the safety of the consumer. The Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO) has been carefully crafted after years of trial and error to reduce the risk to the most vulnerable populations, who are also the most in need. The standards for raw milk must be twice that to pasteurized milk because raw milk is potentially, extremely hazardous. Raw milk may have a place in the commercial market, but only if the product and its producers are held to the standards set in place by the PMO with additionally testing on each milking. Research shows a clean facility and healthy animals do not guarantee bacteria filled milk. All milk produced for retail must be tested to insure safety.

Alaska agriculture is expanding by necessity. The availability of a safe, reliable, and adequate food supply is a very real concern for many Alaskans as they think about the well-being of their families. It is the responsibility of the Department of Environmental Conservation to put the proper checks and balances in place, holding everyone to the highest standards to grow this industry safely. It is possible to provide safe, sustainable milk for all Alaskans. However, this is not the answer. This is a reckless abandonment of the high standards set in place years ago by the state of Alaska. Commercial raw milk and value added products are dangerous and threatens the health and wellness of Alaskans. I strongly encourage you to set high standards with stringent checks and balances if you are to legalize the sale of raw milk and raw milk products.

One Alaska milk recall, outbreak or death would be detrimental to this growing industry. Unregulated raw milk for commercial sales is bad for Alaska Agriculture.

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-questions-and-answers.html>

<https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/dangers-raw-milk-unpasteurized-milk-can-pose-serious-health-risk>