



Raw milk: friend or foe?

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Many people tend to believe that foods that have not been processed are better for their health. However, very often the opposite is true. Since ages, food is processed to eliminate micro-organisms that can make people sick.

The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is concerned about a growing trend towards the consumption of raw, unpasteurized milk and raw milk-based dairy products. Farms offer raw milk from cows, goats, sheep, or other animals, without a clear communication of the risks associated with it.

Raw milk and raw milk-based products may contain many pathogens that can make people seriously sick, such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Salmonella species*, *E. coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis and bovis*, *Brucella species*, *Coxiella Burnetii* and *Yersinia enterocolitica*. These bacteria may cause vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, headache and body ache while some people, especially vulnerable groups such as children and older people, can develop acute life-threatening illness.

In recent months, several European countries have reported outbreaks of these diseases which were directly related to the drinking of unpasteurised raw milk. These cases should not have occurred as they could have been prevented.

Today, many foods are pasteurized. Pasteurization is a scientific and evidence-based process which heats milk to a high temperature applied for a short period of time. The temperatures and times are set up to destroy these bacteria and other microorganisms that may cause sickness. Pasteurization does **not** significantly change the taste and the nutritional value of milk and dairy products and it gives them a longer shelf life.

In the context of the principle "*prevention is better than cure*" FVE is of the opinion that many forms of processing are needed to protect consumers' health and pasteurization is one of them.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) is an umbrella organisation of 44 veterinary organisations from 38 European countries, representing a total of around 200 000 veterinarians.
2. The Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) strives to promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe.

For further information, consult the FVE website <http://www.fve.org> or contact the FVE Secretariat on tel +32 2 533 70 20 or by email to info@fve.org

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