

Raw drinking milk hygiene guidance

Business guidance on raw drinking milk and raw cream and outline of current controls, milk hygiene guidance and testing milk for antibiotic residues.

Raw or unpasteurized milk is more susceptible to being infected by harmful bacteria. This page sets out the hygiene controls this type of milk in the UK.

Raw drinking milk and raw cream

We advise that unpasteurised or raw milk and raw cream may contain harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning. If you are from a vulnerable group or have a weakened immune system, you are particularly vulnerable to food poisoning and should not consume unpasteurised milk and/or cream.

Vulnerable groups include people aged 65 or over, people who are pregnant, immune-compromised, infants and children.

Read more business guidance on [registering and selling raw cows drinking milk](#).

Current controls on raw drinking milk sales

If appropriate hygiene controls are applied, there are lower levels of risk associated with consumption of raw drinking milk – nevertheless, the risk is heightened for young children, people aged 65 or over, people who are pregnant, and/or immune-compromised.

In 2015, our Board identified that warnings about these risks should be detailed at the point of sale as per current legislation to allow the consumer to take an informed decision about the consumption of such product.

Our Board also agreed that sale restrictions should remain in place, as described by current legislation. The current controls in place aim to balance consumer choice, alongside public health protection and wider consumer interests.

Outline of current controls

The following controls for raw cows' drinking milk (RCDM) are provided in domestic legislation and concern England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Sales of RDM (all species) are prohibited in Scotland. Read our [current controls on raw cows' drinking milk](#)

The sale of raw drinking milk from sheep, goats or buffaloes

- is not subject to the restrictions at registered milk production holdings
- RDM from buffaloes has to comply with the herd status requirement - at/from the farm gate or in a farmhouse catering operation of the farm where the RCDM has been obtained, at farmers' markets (by the farmer) by a distributor from a vehicle used as a shop premises lawfully, for example, milk rounds.
- RDM from sheep and goats must come from animals that are healthy and belonging to a production holding that is brucellosis free.

- RDM must comply with dairy hygiene rules and microbiological standards
- compliance with these requirements is monitored at inspections programmed on a risk basis.

England

Raw drinking milk from sheep and goats, but not buffaloes, has to carry the health warning. In Wales and Northern Ireland, raw milk from all three species has to carry the appropriate health warning.

The sale of raw cream

- is not subject to the restrictions at production holding and milking premises
- must comply with all the requirements that apply to milk products under dairy hygiene rules and microbiological standards
- must be made with milk meeting the herd status criteria - milk may only be sold direct to consumers by the occupier of a registered milk production holdings and RDM must comply with dairy hygiene rules and microbiological standards
- raw cream is not required to carry the health warning but the words 'made with raw milk' must be displayed on the product
- compliance with these requirements is monitored through risk-based inspections

Registering to sell raw drinking milk

[Registration and approval guidance for raw cows drinking milk.](#)

Raw drinking milk production

The number of [registered raw cows' drinking milk \(RCDM\) producers](#) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is:

- estimated to account for only 0.01% of cows' milk consumption
- approx. 160 registered producers of raw cows' drinking milk, in 2017
- consumption of raw drinking milk from goats, sheep and buffalo is also limited