FDA PRESS RELEASE

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Public Health Agencies Warn of Outbreaks Related to Drinking Raw Milk
Latest outbreak of campylobacteriosis in Midwest is linked to unpasteurized product

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, along with several state agencies, is alerting consumers to an outbreak of campylobacteriosis associated with drinking raw milk. At least 12 confirmed illnesses have been recently reported in Michigan. Symptoms of campylobacteriosis include diarrhea, abdominal pain and fever.

The FDA is collaborating with the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), the Illinois Department of Public Health, the Indiana State Board of Animal Health and the Indiana State Health Department, to investigate the outbreak. MDCH reports that, as of March 24, 2010, it received reports of 12 confirmed cases of illness from *Campylobacter* infections in consumers who drank raw milk. The raw milk originated from Forest Grove Dairy in Middlebury, Ind.

Raw milk is unpasteurized milk from hoofed mammals, such as cows, sheep, or goats. Raw milk may contain a wide variety of harmful bacteria – including *Salmonella, E. coli* O157:H7, *Listeria, Campylobacter* and *Brucella* -- that may cause illness and possibly death. Public health authorities, including FDA and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have expressed concerns about the hazards of drinking raw milk for decades.

Symptoms of illness caused by various bacteria commonly found in raw milk may include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, headache and body ache. Most healthy individuals recover quickly from illness caused by raw milk. However, some people may have more severe illness, and the harmful bacteria in raw milk can be especially dangerous for pregnant women, the elderly, infants, young children and people with weakened immune systems.

If consumers of raw milk are experiencing one or more of these symptoms after consuming raw milk or food products made from raw milk, they should contact their health care provider immediately.

Since 1987, the FDA has required all milk packaged for human consumption to be pasteurized before being delivered for introduction into interstate commerce. Pasteurization, a process that heats milk to a specific temperature for a set period of time, kills bacteria responsible for diseases, such as listeriosis, salmonellosis, campylobacteriosis, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, diphtheria and brucellosis. FDA's pasteurization requirement also applies to other milk products, with the exception of a few aged cheeses.

From 1998 to 2008, 85 outbreaks of human infections resulting from consumption of raw milk were reported to CDC. These outbreaks included a total of 1,614 reported illnesses, 187 hospitalizations and 2 deaths. Because not all cases of foodborne illness are recognized and reported, the actual number of illnesses associated with raw milk likely is greater.

Proponents of drinking raw milk often claim that raw milk is more nutritious than pasteurized milk and that raw milk is inherently antimicrobial, thus making pasteurization unnecessary. There is no meaningful nutritional difference between pasteurized and raw milk, and raw milk does not contain compounds that will kill harmful bacteria.

For more on the raw milk, please visit www.foodsafety.gov.

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Additional Information:

The Dangers of Raw Milk
Questions & Answers: Raw Milk
Consumer Information about Milk Safety
The Michigan Department of Community Health
The Illinois Department of Public Health