

News release

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Oregon Public Health officials investigating *E. coli* cases

Three children are hospitalized with E.coli O157:H7 infections

The Oregon Public Health Division, the Oregon Department of Agriculture and several local health departments are investigating an outbreak of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 infections. Three children with laboratory-confirmed infections have been hospitalized. A fourth child has lab-confirmed *E.coli* but has not been hospitalized. All of the children consumed raw, unpasteurized milk obtained from Foundation Farm in Clackamas County. The farm has voluntarily ceased their milk distribution. The investigation is ongoing.

Customers of this small farm's milk are being notified to discard their milk. Others who may have raw milk from this farm should not drink this milk and should dispose of the milk.

Two of the hospitalized children, all under the age of 15, have developed hemolytic uremic syndrome, a type of kidney failure. Other customers of this dairy are reporting recent diarrhea and other symptoms typical of *E. coli* O157 infections.

"Raw milk can carry harmful bacteria that can make you very sick or kill you. Pasteurized milk has many health benefits. Raw milk is not any healthier than pasteurized milk and can carry illness-causing bacteria," said Katrina Hedberg, M.D., M.P.H., Oregon Public Health Division state epidemiologist.

(more)

Public health officials advise against drinking unpasteurized milk. While it is possible to get foodborne illnesses from many different foods, raw milk is one of the riskiest of all, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Milk from Foundation Farm and raw cow's milk in general is not allowed to be sold in retail stores in Oregon. The dairy only distributed to 48 households that were part of a herd-share, in which people contract to take ownership of a portion of a herd or individual animals.

State and local public health officials in Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah counties are investigating these cases, including interviewing customers and family members of those infected. Officials are advising that any containers, surfaces or other items that may have come in contact with this milk or other products from this farm should be cleaned and sanitized with bleach or other disinfectants.

E. coli O157 infections are characterized by diarrhea — sometimes bloody — and abdominal pain. Kidney failure and related complications may occur, especially among young children and the elderly. Symptoms usually develop within two to eight days of eating contaminated food. Antibiotics have not been shown to reduce the duration or severity of symptoms, and may increase the risk of kidney failure.

For more information about *E. coli*:

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/diseasesconditions/diseasesaz/ecoli/pages/facts.aspx>.

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