



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Department of Health warns public not to drink raw milk

*DOH embargoes unpasteurized goat milk
from various pet store supply and food retailers*

HONOLULU – Hawai'i Department of Health Food Safety Branch inspectors are visiting pet supply stores and food retailers throughout the state and issuing cease and desist notices to those engaged in the illegal sale of unpasteurized goat milk.

An embargo on raw milk products, which are not safe for human consumption, is now in effect. Pet stores or any other retailer that has raw milk in their possession must remove the product from sale immediately and destroy or return the product to their supplier. Failure to do so may result in seizure and fines of up to \$10,000 per day.

As of July 1, there were nearly 20 O'ahu pet stores that were selling the unpasteurized goat milk product. The health department is continuing its inspections today.

Under Hawai'i law, only Grade A pasteurized milk and milk products may be sold to the final consumer or to restaurants.

"The goat milk is being advertised as 'pet food,' but the sale of any form of raw fluid milk is a risk to public health because it is easily diverted for human consumption," said Peter Oshiro, chief of the Food Safety Branch. "There are many in our community that mistakenly believe that drinking raw milk is healthy, but this is simply untrue."

Drinking unpasteurized milk is unsafe because it may result in serious illnesses, hospitalizations and even death. Raw milk has the potential to carry and transmit dangerous pathogens including E. Coli, Salmonella, and a host of other bacteria that can cause disease. It is especially dangerous for our keiki, kupuna, or those with weakened immune systems to drink raw milk because they may not be able to fend off these pathogens as a normal healthy individual would.

Drinking raw milk is particularly dangerous because children infected through consumption of raw milk can spread disease through fecal-oral means and cause a serious disease outbreak among other children with whom they come into contact. Raw milk consumption by a few individuals has the potential to negatively impact our community at large by causing an outbreak of disease.

The Food Safety Branch protects and promotes the health of Hawai'i residents and visitors through education of food industry workers and regulation of food establishments statewide. The branch conducts routine health inspections of food establishments where food products are prepared, manufactured, distributed, or sold. The branch also investigates the sources of foodborne illnesses and potential adulteration; and is charged with the prevention or mitigation of foodborne outbreaks. Health inspectors work with business owners, food service workers, and the food industry to ensure safe food preparation practices and sanitary conditions.

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