

HERD SHARE INFORMATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is raw milk safe to drink?

If you search the web for "raw milk" you will find many, many discussions on the topic of raw milk. Raw Milk Facts.com and RealMilk.com are two great resources. Much of the "other" information on raw milk comes from misunderstandings and political pressure from the commercial dairy industry. When everyone had a family milk cow who grazed on grass, no one worried about "bad milk" because the "good bacteria" in grass-fed milk outweighs the "bad bacteria" and actually keeps the milk safe to drink. In fact, this type of milk doesn't go bad, ever. It simply turns to cheese.

When milking made its big move to commercial dairies, the diet of the cow switched from mostly grass to mostly grain. The change in diet and the crowded commercial dairy conditions suddenly made raw milk a health hazard. The actual make-up of the milk had changed and it was now subject to having the "bad bacteria" take over and make people sick. To preserve their large commercial dairies, the obvious solution was to pasteurize the milk. Pasteurized milk intentionally destroys all the bacteria (good and bad) and changes the protein structure of the milk. The advent of pasteurized milk was a completely new product that many people suddenly couldn't digest (the beginning of milk allergies and lactose intolerance) and a product that rots. The dairy industry initiated a huge advertising campaign to sell the consumer on the new idea and to get them to accept this different product. Most people today are raised with the belief that only pasteurized milk is truly safe to drink. In fact, a backyard cow, fed primarily grass & hay and housed in a clean facility produces real milk that is perfectly safe to drink.

Who drinks Raw Milk?

Many people who cannot tolerate pasteurized milk are delighted to discover they have no trouble digesting raw milk. It doesn't work for all but so many lactose intolerant people can use raw milk. Other people find that the heavy lactobacillus content in raw milk (similar to what you find in commercial yogurt or cultured buttermilk) helps keep their digestive system running smoothly. Many people simply prefer the fuller taste of raw milk. Some people's doctors have even suggested a raw diet and some people simply prefer to eat more natural foods and milk from cows without supplemental hormones.

Is your cow grass fed? Organic? Hormones? Antibiotics?

Our girls graze primarily on grass (hay in the winter). They get a small amount of non-GMO, non-soy grains and alfalfa pellets at milking as a treat and as a way to give them extra vitamins, protein and probiotics. We feel the girls are healthier with regular small amounts of feed. This is also in-line with the guidance we receive from our Nutritionist who recommends a certain amount of starch in their diets, which the grain provides. We purchase our hay locally. We purchase hay that conforms to our standards and never use chemicals on our pastures.

As far as antibiotics - it is illegal for ANYONE (even commercial dairies) to release milk tainted with antibiotics into the milk supply. No milk you ever drink from any source should contain antibiotics (I think people get this confused with the beef industry). If we ever have to resort to treatment with antibiotics, we have to throw away the milk for a minimum of 5 days.

Why doesn't everyone have a backyard cow?

If you ever spent 5 minutes around a dairy cow, you may wonder the same thing. A dairy cow is the kindest, sweetest, gentlest animal on the planet. They want nothing more than to love and be loved. They are very smart, know their name, and know which songs they prefer during milk time. They love it when you find just that right "itchy" spot on their back to scratch and will keep you warm when

it's cold in the milking parlor. It's peaceful leaning up against that giant warm body while listening to the sound of the milk going into the bucket. Bliss!

That's the good part. The other reality is that a milk cow is A LOT of work. They have to be milked twice a day about nine months out of the year. ALWAYS. No exceptions for holidays, illness, family business, blackouts, blizzards, thunderstorms, frigid cold or vacations. It's a big commitment to have a milk cow. Not only do you have to milk them, you have to feed and clean up after them. They eat a lot. About a bale or more of hay every day in the winter. They drink about 20 gallons of water a day, and they produce a tremendous amount of "organic fertilizer" every day. But for your efforts, you not only get that special cow love, you also get all the milk, cream, butter, cheese, sour cream, buttermilk, cream cheese, ice cream, cottage cheese, etc. that your family can consume. Once you have a milk cow, it's hard to imagine life without one.

What kind of cow am I buying?

The cow in which you're buying a share is a purebred Jersey or Normande.

Is Jersey and Normande milk different than other milk?

Jersey cows are the most popular "family cow" for two reasons. First, they are the smallest of the milk cows (about 900 pounds) and secondly, they have the highest butterfat content of any milk. Our Jersey cows are certified with A2A2 genetics.

Normandes are a traditional breed out of France used to make many French cheeses such as Camembert de Normandie which must be made in the province of Normandy from Normande cows. The milk is specifically suited for cheesemaking. The current Normande population has mostly A2A2 genetics due to traditional breeding practices. The Normande breed also comes close to Jerseys in butterfat content!

The black and white Holstein you are probably familiar with (used by commercial milk producers) can produce twice the daily milk supply but has about half the butterfat of Jersey milk. Jersey's and Normandes also have milk that is very yellow in color due to the high content of butterfat.

Jersey and Normande milk also contain about 25% more protein than milk from a Holstein. Even "skimmed" Jersey milk tastes richer than whole milk from a Holstein due to the protein content.

How should I clean my jars?

1. Rinse all milk residue out of your jar with warm water and scrub the outer ring of the jar and lids. This is an important step.
2. Wash well with soap and hot water. You can put them in the dishwasher though it is not recommended. You may still end up cleaning by hand if the dishwasher doesn't do the trick. It is preferred you wash the lid by hand with hot soapy water. Your jars should smell fresh and clean and not like milk or cheese. If they have any odor other than clean, wash again. A re-wash fee of \$2.50, per jar, will be applied if your jars are not returned fresh and clean on a routine basis.
3. It's especially important that your jars and lids are completely dry before screwing the lid back on. If the jars are not dry, unwanted bacteria can grow in your jar. DO NOT leave paper towels in the jar to aid drying.
4. To err is human, so we understand if you occasionally forget to return your jars. But if you do, please return extra the next week. We can substitute plastic jugs for missing milk jars, but there is an additional fee for this. Also, please keep your milk jars for milk and your pickles and preserves in their own jars.

How should I handle the milk that is supplied to me?

Always keep your milk chilled. If you have some distance to travel, or stops to make before you arrive home, it's imperative that you keep your milk at refrigerator temperature until you return home. Take care that it's not left out for long at meal time. If you do not maintain a cold temperature this will accelerate the "change" process and your milk will turn sour and become less pleasant to drink.

Does freezing damage raw dairy products?

Freezing puts raw milk products to sleep and has little effect on the important health benefits that raw dairy products provide. Enzymes and bacteria are fully

active when they awake for thawing. Some vitamins are reduced by trace amounts after being frozen. The flavor is affected slightly by this and is not always apparent. Thaw milk by placing the frozen milk in your fridge for a day or two. Slow thawing this way, in my opinion, gives good results.

When does a cow make milk?

A cow only produces milk after she's had a calf. Our cows will lactate for up to 275 days, and then we "dry them off" so they do not produce milk for the last few months before their next calf arrives. This way, your rejuvenated cow will calve with vigor and be healthy for the next season. During the time your cow is not producing milk.

Where will my cow be kept?

The cows are located in Claudville, VA - and we welcome you to come and say hi to the cows! It's best to schedule an appointment, as we keep a pretty full schedule. Or plan your arrival during our store hours: Tuesdays 10 am to 12 noon or Saturdays 3 pm to 5 pm.

How does the farmer collect and store milk?

We use a closed system milking machine to milk our cows. After we milk them, we transfer the milk into glass containers and put them into an ice bath to bring the temperature down very quickly. Later they may be stored in the refrigerator at 35-37 degrees until delivered to you.

Where do I pick up my milk?

We are at the Wytheville Farmer's Market every Saturday from 8 am to 12 noon from May through October and the 2nd and 4th Saturday November through April. You can also pick up at the farm on either Tuesdays from 10 am to 12 noon or Saturdays from 3 pm to 5 pm.

If I miss a week for travel, etc. will I get a financial credit on my account?

No, we never issue financial credits for this. You are paying for the cows to be tended, fed, milked, etc. and that must be done every day regardless if you are around to drink the milk or not. We recommend getting someone to pick up the milk for you. Or, if you let us know, we will not make your jars up at all.

How is billing handled?

Invoicing is done at the beginning of each month. Invoices are emailed out to everyone. You may either pay by check (or cash or money order) by mailing it in or bringing it with you when you pick up the first time in the month.

Alternatively, you can take part in our automatic billing program which draws the money from your checking account on the first of the month. There is no cost to you for this service.

How are communications handled between the farm and shareholders?

We use email as much as possible. All invoicing is delivered by email. Phone calls are often used in the initial set up. However, the phone is inefficient many times as we often get caught up in “phone tag”. We are often doing outside things and are consequently unavailable to answer phone calls as they come in. We don’t get cell phone service at the farm, so text messaging is not a reliable means of communication with us.