

DAIRY FOOD SAFETY

The dairy industry takes food safety very seriously. Throughout the years, dairy farmers and processors have worked closely with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and state regulatory officials to establish safety regulations and practices including the *Pasteurized Milk Ordinance* and the *Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point* system. As a result, American milk and dairy products are among the safest and most highly regulated foods in the world.

Milk Safety Regulations and Procedures

- The federal Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO) is a set of requirements for milk production, milk hauling, pasteurization, product safety, equipment sanitation and labeling. It is one of the most effective tools to protect the safety of milk. It is very effective; today, less than 1 percent of foodborne illness outbreaks in the U.S. involve dairy products.¹
- Milk is routinely sampled and tested by state regulatory authorities according to procedures outlined in the PMO. In addition, the FDA and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) monitor compliance with the provisions of the PMO on a nationwide basis.¹
- The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system is a structured and scientific process used throughout the food industry to help ensure food safety. Processing plants identify critical steps throughout the manufacturing process and establish plans to monitor and minimize any risks. HACCP plans are reviewed, approved and enforced by food safety agencies.

The Role of Pasteurization

- Since its introduction more than a century ago, pasteurization has been recognized around the world as an essential tool for ensuring that milk and dairy products are safe. It is a simple, effective method to kill bacteria without affecting the taste or nutritional value of milk.¹
- Pasteurization involves heating raw milk to a certain temperature for a specific period of time. In the U.S., pasteurized milk must be heated to a minimum of 145°F for 30 minutes or to 161°F or more for 15 seconds.¹
- The dairy industry, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the FDA and many health and scientific organizations strongly support pasteurization of milk.⁵

An Antibiotic-Free Milk Supply

- Sometimes it's necessary for farmers to treat cows with antibiotics when they are ill, just as humans sometimes need medication when they are sick. If a cow is being treated with antibiotics, she is taken out of the milking herd and not put back into the herd until her milk tests free of antibiotics.
- Every tank load of milk entering dairy processing plants is strictly tested for animal drug residues. The U.S. dairy industry conducts more than 3.5 million tests each year to ensure that antibiotics are kept out of the milk supply.⁶ In 2003, less than one-tenth of one percent (0.067%) of loads tested positive for animal drug residues, including antibiotics. Any tanker that tests positive is disposed of immediately, never reaching the public.^{1,6}

The Facts About rbST

- Bovine somatotropin (bST) is a hormone that is naturally produced by cows; it directs how energy and nutrients are used for growth and milk production. rbST is a synthesized copy of this naturally occurring hormone.
- Considerable testing was done before rbST was commercially released, and the FDA has determined that there is no difference between milk from cows treated with rbST and those not given rbST.
- Milk from rbST-supplemented cows is safe for human consumption. This has been affirmed and reaffirmed since the use of rbST was approved in the early 1990s.
- There are several reasons why bST, which is naturally present in cow's milk, does not have any physiological effect on humans consuming the milk. bST is species-specific, which means that it is biologically inactive in humans. Also, pasteurization destroys 90% of bST in milk. The remaining, trace amounts of bST in milk are broken down into inactive fragments (i.e., constituent amino acids) by enzymes in the human gastrointestinal tract, just like any other protein.^{8,9}

References

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