

Public Health Advisory
May 23, 2013

Campylobacter Outbreak Associated with Consumption of Raw Milk
Kenai Peninsula, May 2013

The purpose of this Health Advisory is to inform Alaska health care providers of a new and potentially ongoing outbreak of *Campylobacter jejuni* infections associated with consumption of raw milk distributed by a Kenai Peninsula cow-share program. This is the same Kenai Peninsula cow-share program that was linked to the *Campylobacter coli* outbreak that sickened at least 31 people earlier this year.

On May 22, the Alaska State Public Health Laboratory notified the Alaska Section of Epidemiology (SOE) of two *C. jejuni* isolates with an indistinguishable pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) pattern. These two isolates came from stool samples of two unrelated persons living on the Kenai Peninsula. Both persons indicated that their diarrheal illness started within 10 days after consuming raw milk from the same Kenai Peninsula cow-share farm (Farm A). Nationally, this PFGE pattern has only been seen once before--from a *C. jejuni* isolate obtained from cow manure collected on Farm A in February 2013 (see: http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2013_12.pdf). In addition to the two laboratory-confirmed cases, three other persons have also been identified as having developed acute diarrheal illness within 10 days after consuming Farm A raw milk. These individuals did not seek medical attention.

Campylobacter are bacteria that can cause diarrhea (sometimes bloody), abdominal cramping/pain, nausea, vomiting, and fever within 2 to 5 days after exposure. The illness typically lasts about a week. Sometimes campylobacter infection can lead to more serious health consequences, including reactive arthritis (as occurred in several cases during the February *C. coli* outbreak), and Guillain-Barré syndrome. In persons with compromised immune systems, campylobacter occasionally spread to the bloodstream and cause a serious life-threatening infection.

Sources of campylobacter include undercooked meat or cross-contamination of other foods by raw meat or by feces from an infected animal. Outbreaks are often associated with consumption of unpasteurized milk or contaminated water. Animals can also be infected, and some people have acquired their infection from contact with the stool of an infected or colonized animal. The organism does not commonly spread from person-to-person, but this can happen if the infected person is producing a large volume of diarrhea.

Recommendations

- Health care providers should educate families about the risks of consuming raw dairy products; informational materials are available at: <http://www.realrawmilkfacts.com/>
- Providers should obtain stool cultures in patients with acute gastrointestinal illness and history of raw dairy consumption.
- Persons who are currently experiencing symptoms as described above should contact their health care provider and alert them to this advisory.
- Persons who have consumed raw milk since March 2013 and subsequently developed a diarrheal illness should contact the Section of Epidemiology (SOE) to report the illness and obtain information about the outbreak. Call SOE at 907-269-8000 (in Anchorage) or toll free at 1-800-478-0084 and ask to speak to a member of the Infectious Disease Program.
- Share this advisory with persons you know who consume raw milk.

Additional resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Campylobacter information:
<http://www.cdc.gov/nczved/divisions/dfbmd/diseases/campylobacter/>
- Alaska Epidemiology *Bulletins* on raw milk and associated *Campylobacter* outbreaks:
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2013_12.pdf
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011_18.pdf
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2011_22.pdf
http://www.epi.alaska.gov/bulletins/docs/b2009_29.pdf
- Alaska DEH information on dairy products in Alaska:
<http://www.dec.alaska.gov/eh/vet/DairyMeat.html>
- Information on pasteurization:
http://www.idfa.org/files/249_Pasteurization%20Definition%20and%20Methods.pdf