Illnesses linked to raw milk
Two dairies identified as sources of the outbreaks.
(Salt Lake Tribune, UT)
By Dawn House

Fifteen people became ill in two separate clusters in incidences linked to drinking raw milk, state health officials say.

The first cluster involved nine reported cases of Campylobacter infection among residents in Weber, Davis and Cache counties. The second cluster involved six reported cases of Salmonella infection in Utah, Salt Lake and Wasatch counties.

All who became ill reported drinking raw, unpasteurized milk produced at two licensed dairies, said Julia Hall, food-borne epidemiologist for the Utah Department of Health.

All patients have recovered. Common symptoms of infection with Campylobacter and Salmonella include diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, headache, nausea and vomiting. Illness can last for up to a week or more and can be serious. In some severe cases, illness can lead to more serious complications, including Guillain-Barré Syndrome.

"There are inherent risks associated with the consumption of raw milk because of disease-causing bacteria that are commonly found in milk, such as Campylobacter, Salmonella, Listeria, and E. coli," said Hall. "Even with strict state regulations in place, there is no guarantee that raw milk is free of disease-causing bacteria."

Anyone who has consumed raw milk in recent days and is experiencing symptoms should contact a health-care provider.

Ropelato Dairy, 4019 W. 1800 South in Ogden, was the source of the Campylobacter outbreak. Samples came back high for coliform counts, linked to the presence of disease-causing pathogens in the milk.

Ropelato’s license to sell raw milk has been suspended, said Larry Lewis, spokesman for the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food.

Calls to the dairy went unanswered.

Redmond Dairy, in central Utah, produced raw milk for stores in Heber City and Orem linked to the Salmonella illness cluster. Samples from April 5 to April 22 came back positive for Salmonella, said Hall. The dairy's St. George store was not linked to the outbreak.

Redmond manager Brandon Foote said the dairy, which was not sanctioned, has since been testing every batch of milk through a third-party lab, and all samples have come back negative for any pathogens.

Raw milk, which makes up only a small niche of the state's dairy industry, contaminated with disease-causing bacteria does not smell or look any different from non-contaminated raw milk, and there is no obvious way for the consumer to know if the raw milk is contaminated.