

THE RAWMI RAMP

The RMPA got in touch with our American friends at The Raw Milk Institute (RAWMI) to hear about how some of their best producers were getting along with on farm lab testing.

By RAWMI founder Mark McAfee

Raw milk safety starts with farmer mindset and the cow. Fresh raw milk that comes out of the teat on a healthy clean cow is less than 1 coliform. That means that any coliform levels in excess of 1 coliform was a result of the dairy farmer and not the cow.

The Raw Milk Institute food safety risk assessment RAMP (or Risk Analysis Management Plan) systems are grounded in the Grass to Glass concept of creating and sustaining the optimal conditions for animal health, proper milking practices and post milking management of the raw milk. Each farmer develops their own RAMP which identifies their own risks and puts in place a plan to manage those risks. RAWMI has focused on three things to achieve low risk and excellence among their trained farmers:

1. Utilize dedicated specific high standards for raw milk for human consumption, also known as the "Common Standards". These RAWMI standards exceed those used by the AAMMC and the state of California and include less than 10 coliforms, SPC less than 5,000. LISTED farmers routinely get less than 1 coliforms and 250-500 SPC in their raw milk samples.
2. Train farmers on optimization of their specific conditions through a written food safety Risk Analysis Management Plan (RAMP with GMPs, SSOPs and CCPs).
3. Routinely test the finished products to ensure that they are low risk and safe.

After years of mentoring and training more than 1200 farmers in USA, Canada, NZ, Australia, UK, and other countries, PhD researchers in British Columbia (Whitehead & Lake) and the Netherlands (Berge & Baars) PUBMED published the results of these efforts. They called it the RAWMI Effect! When farmers use standards for human consumption verses standards intended for pasteurization...everything dramatically changes for the better!

In 2019, Dr. Ton Baars and Dr. Caterina Berge DVM provided training to more than 100 raw milk farmers in the UK. The Raw Milk Producers Association of the UK has reported to RAWMI that as a result of this training there has been a reduced incidence of test failure. This is great news but there is more work to be done which is where on farm testing comes in.

Our farmers love the confidence of having their own on farm "3M Petri Film or CHARM" labs and knowing their numbers. Here is what a few of our RAWMI Listed farmers have to say about RAMP food safety and testing.

AARON MCAFEE
CALIFORNIA USA, RAW FARM

"Healthy cows and Data runs everything. We know our numbers for every batch. No more surprises from inspectors because we already have the test results.

That allows us to reward the guys doing the milking because we all see the same data and can identify problems early to assure that our goals are being achieved. As a result we have a much better product with

super happy customers. Our insurance rates have dropped substantially over the years, our brand and consumers are protected."

CHAZ SELF
WISCONSIN USA, GRASSWAY ORGANICS

"With my on farm lab, I can run tests as often as I want. I sleep well at night knowing that these high standards are being met."

RODRICK SHANK
PENNSYLVANIA USA, THE FAMILY COW

"We use our on-farm lab as a daily quality assurance system. It works great!!"

BEN BEICHLER
VIRGINIA USA, CREAMBROOK FARMS

"Our on-farm lab gives us producers confidence in the quality and safety of our product and our consumers peace of mind. The lab is an unemotional metric that keeps us on point with our systems and gives us an early alert when problems arise. With its low cost and ease of operation I can't imagine operating without our own testing system."

KELSEY BAREFOOT, BSN, RN
NORTH CAROLINA USA, THE BAREFOOT COW

"As both a raw milk producer and a nurse, I knew having an on-farm lab was exactly what I needed to give me peace of mind about the milk I was sharing with my customers and my family. For me, the highlight of an on-farm lab is the convenience; I can test every batch of milk, anytime I want, for very little expense. The process of testing is so simple, I love sharing with

Raw Milk Producers Association

other dairy producers how easy and quick it is to know the coliform and standard plate count results of your milk, within 24-48 hours. My favourite aspect of the on-farm lab is that it acts as a “check and balance” for my process. For example, if I change the equipment cleaner I am using, I test the milk after using the new cleaner to compare the results of the equipment cleaned with the old cleaner. If I see standard plate count or coliform results trending upward, I start making changes, checking my equipment and cows before my results even get above RAWMI standards...saving me milk, money, and time. My customers also appreciate the transparency of knowing I test the milk and they value seeing the results themselves.”

Having an on-farm lab is rewarding when you can skip the hassle of

sending off milk to be tested and view your clean milk test results right on your farm. Whether raw dairy farmers are producing milk for their customers or their own families, I highly recommend having your own on-farm lab!

In the next 18 months even more advanced technologies will be available to verify that raw milk is safe and pathogen free. When this new on farm rapid test PCR system is released, pathogens in raw milk will be detected in less than 6 hours with each test costing less than \$15 USD. The RAWMI Common Standards have done an excellent job of risk reduction by managing all the factors that the farmer can actually see and touch. These general risks can be managed and measured by use of the coliform count, but the next long

awaited step is on farm pathogen detection which will find pathogens that can (on rare occasion) be shed from inside of the clean udder.

RAWMI has provided some training to UK dairies but has not LISTED any UK dairies. We welcome the RAW MILK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION and its members that wish to become LISTED. We are all in this together. It is free and we provide grants for on-farm lab development. Our growing community of farmers enjoy a sanctuary of support and continuing education that is mutually shared in our commitment for excellence in raw milk production.

