



News Statement

13 October 2017

Investigation into *E. coli* O157 outbreak

Public health, environmental health and food standards experts are asking people who may have bought raw (unpasteurised) milk from an Isle of Wight farm to return or dispose of it, following an outbreak of *E. coli* O157.

Public Health England South East's Hampshire and Isle of Wight Health Protection team, in partnership with environmental health officers from Isle of Wight Council and the Food Standards Agency, are investigating the outbreak. Drinking raw milk from Briddlesford Lodge Farm has been confirmed as a source of the infection.

There have been four confirmed cases of *E.coli* O157 and an additional three cases of Haemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS) linked to this outbreak. All four cases of *E.coli* O157 have made a good recovery and the three cases with HUS are in hospital and receiving treatment.

The Isle of Wight Council's environmental health department has been working closely with the farm, who have co-operated fully, to ensure that the affected raw milk has not entered the sales chain since Monday 25 September 2017.

Dr Ishani Kar-Purkayastha, Consultant in Communicable Disease Control for Public Health England South East, said: "We have been working with colleagues to investigate these cases and hope all those affected are better soon.

"All steps have been taken to prevent the spread of infection further including removal of the milk from sale, and necessary hygiene and safety measures.

"As an added precaution we, along with the environmental health team and the Food Standards Agency, are asking anyone who has raw milk purchased from Briddlesford Farm on, or before Monday, 25 September 2017 to either return it to the farm or dispose of it. This includes raw milk that may have been frozen for future use."

Professor Guy Poppy, Chief Scientific Adviser at the Food Standards Agency, said:

“Unpasteurised or ‘raw’ milk may contain harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning because it has not been heat treated.

“Long standing FSA advice has been that older people, infants, children, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems, who are more vulnerable to food poisoning, should not consume raw drinking milk.”

Professor Rida Elkheir, Isle of Wight Council’s director of public health, said: “I would like to reassure the public that all of the agencies and the farm have acted quickly to reduce any risk and the farm is continuing to work closely with us.”

Note to Editors

E.coli O157 infection can cause a range of symptoms, including severe abdominal pain, diarrhoea and blood in diarrhoea. A small number of cases, go on to develop a serious condition called Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome (HUS). This may lead to kidney failure. Possible causes of infection in this country include eating infected food, such as raw leafy vegetables, undercooked meat, or raw milk products. The infection can also spread from person to person, and from contact with farm animals or their faeces. Hand washing is very important in preventing the spread of infection.

Anyone with any concerns about symptoms should contact their GP. The symptoms of *E. Coli* O157 infection may include:-

- Feeling sick
- Abdominal pains
- Diarrhoea
- Diarrhoea with blood
- Blood in urine
- Passing smaller amounts of urine than usual

Read more information about E.coli O157 here: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Escherichia-Coli-O157/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Consumer advice on consumption of raw milk

Raw milk can carry harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness. The FSA considers that pasteurisation (heat treatment) is the best way to address the food safety risk associated with raw drinking milk and cream. However, it recognises that some consumers wish to exercise choice in continuing to have access to raw drinking milk and milk products.

Pregnant women, children, the elderly and those who are unwell or have chronic illness are particularly susceptible to disease and that is why we advise them not to consume raw milk.

More information is available here: <https://www.food.gov.uk/science/raw-drinking-milk-and-cream>

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