

British Columbia Herdshare Association 2014 Community Survey Results

Response Summary:

Complete Responses:	238
Incomplete Responses:	20
Total responses:	258

Demographics

“1. What is your interest in herdshares and/or raw milk?” (Check all that apply)

Answer	Count	Percentage
I am a herdshare farmer / agister.	8	2.8%
I am a shareholder in a herdshare.	193	68.2%
I am looking for a herdshare to join.	25	8.8%
I drink raw milk but do not belong to a herdshare.	24	8.5%
I have been involved in a herdshare in the past, but am not so right now.	13	4.6%
[None of the above, but] I support food freedom and the right to choose to drink raw milk.	13	4.6%
Other (7):		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have dairy goats • I like to be part of producing my food - better quality • I like to make my own butter, feta, and cheese if I can • I want healthy, wholesome food • I would like to create a herdshare in the future • Support food security, small farmers • We produce milk for our own consumption at this time. Looking at expanding that into a herdshare in the future 		

“2. Where do you currently live?”

Answer	Count	Percentage
Greater Vancouver	128	49.6%
Vancouver Island or Gulf Islands	73	28.3%
Fraser Valley	25	9.7%
Thompson / Okanagan	20	7.8%
Prince George / Cariboo / Chilcotin / Peace River	7	2.7%
Powell River / Sunshine Coast	2	0.8%
Skeena / North Coast / Stikine / Haida Gwaii	1	0.4%
Rockies / Kootenays	1	0.4%
Outside of B.C.	1	0.4%
Total:	258	

“3. What types of dairy animals are owned by your herdshare?”

Answer	Count	Percentage
Cows only	108	41.9%
Cows and Goats	97	37.6%
Goats only	11	4.3%
Sheep and Cows	1	0.4%
Sheep only	0	0.0%
Not Applicable	32	12.4%
Blank	9	3.5%
Total:	258	

“4. Does your herdshare produce meat for shareholders as well as milk?”

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	35	13.6%
No	132	51.2%
No answer	91	35.3%
Total:	258	

Services

“Question 5” consisted of a “multiple choice” set of questions regarding what services respondents would like to see the BCHA provide. The questions were developed with input from members of the community, both agisters and shareholders. Survey respondents were provided with a list of services and three choices as to their preference, “Yes,” “No,” and “No Opinion.”

Knowing that the list in Question 5 would miss out a lot of important information, questions 6 through 8 were provided as “open ended questions” where people could give additional suggestions on what they would and would not like to see.

“5. Should BCHA provide the following services?”

Of the 258 submissions, 16 were incomplete and were not included in the count, leaving 242 completed responses. Blanks on completed submission forms were included in the count.

A. Provide networking opportunities for agisters and shareholders?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	194	80.2%
No	5	2.1%
No opinion	42	17.4%
Blank	1	0.4%
Total:	242	

B. Provide information about “Raw Milk Best Practices”?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	225	93.0%
No	2	0.8%
No opinion	15	6.2%
Blank	0	0.0%
Total:	242	

C. Be a “face” between legislators/regulators and the herdshare community?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	218	90.1%
No	3	1.2%
No opinion	21	8.7%
Blank	0	0.0%
Total:	242	

D. Facilitate agister-to-agister mentoring opportunities?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	182	75.2%
No	1	0.4%
No opinion	57	23.6%
Blank	2	0.8%
Total:	242	

E. Help potential shareholders in finding a herdshare to join?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	213	88.0%
No	9	3.7%
No opinion	19	7.9%
Blank	1	0.4%
Total:	242	

F. Advocate for changes to raw milk laws in B.C.?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	237	97.9%
No	2	0.8%
No opinion	3	1.2%
Blank	0	0.0%
Total:	242	

G. Provide educational opportunities such as classes, seminars, and guest-speakers?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	186	76.9%
No	8	3.3%
No opinion	46	19.0%
Blank	2	0.8%
Total:	242	

H. Provide information and resources for shareholders?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	209	86.4%
No	4	1.7%
No opinion	28	11.6%
Blank	1	0.4%
Total:	242	

I. Provide information and resources for agisters?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	199	82.2%
No	1	0.4%
No opinion	41	16.9%
Blank	1	0.4%
Total:	242	

J. Provide information and resources for the general public?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	203	83.9%
No	7	2.9%
No opinion	30	12.4%
Blank	2	0.8%
Total:	242	

K. Conduct research?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	152	62.8%
No	17	7.0%
No opinion	71	29.3%
Blank	2	0.8%
Total:	242	

Totals:

5. Should BCHA provide the following services?	Yes	No	No opinion	Blank
A. Provide networking opportunities for agisters and shareholders?	194	5	42	1
B. Provide information about "Raw Milk Best Practices"?	225	2	15	0
C. Be a "face" between legislators/regulators and the herdshare community?	218	3	21	0
D. Facilitate agister-to-agister mentoring opportunities?	182	1	57	2
E. Help potential shareholders in finding a herdshare to join?	213	9	19	1
F. Advocate for changes to raw milk laws in B.C.?	237	2	3	0
G. Provide educational opportunities such as classes, seminars, and guest-speakers?	186	8	46	2
H. Provide information and resources for shareholders?	209	4	28	1
I. Provide information and resources for agisters?	199	1	41	1
J. Provide information and resources for the general public?	203	7	30	2
K. Conduct research?	152	17	71	2

Rankings:

5. Should BCHA provide the following services?	Yes	No	No opinion	Blank
F. Advocate for changes to raw milk laws in B.C.?	97.9%	0.8%	1.2%	0.0%
B. Provide information about "Raw Milk Best Practices"?	93.0%	0.8%	6.2%	0.0%
C. Be a "face" between legislators/regulators and the herdshare community?	90.1%	1.2%	8.7%	0.0%
E. Help potential shareholders in finding a herdshare to join?	88.0%	3.7%	7.9%	0.4%
H. Provide information and resources for shareholders?	86.4%	1.7%	11.6%	0.4%
J. Provide information and resources for the general public?	83.9%	2.9%	12.4%	0.8%
I. Provide information and resources for agisters?	82.2%	0.4%	16.9%	0.4%
A. Provide networking opportunities for agisters and shareholders?	80.2%	2.1%	17.4%	0.4%
G. Provide educational opportunities such as classes, seminars, and guest-speakers?	76.9%	3.3%	19.0%	0.8%
D. Facilitate agister-to-agister mentoring opportunities?	75.2%	0.4%	23.6%	0.8%
K. Conduct research?	62.8%	7.0%	29.3%	0.8%

Categorized Responses to Questions 6, 7 and 8,

Question 6. "What should BCHA do?"

Support: (11)

- Classifieds section to help people find small scale milking equipment. Newsletter.
- I hope that herdshare will be more and more accepted by government and that it will be safer for agisters.
- List labs available for milk sampling, sample contracts for 'legal' herd share, make it clear that agisters are taking a risk in providing this service, protect our privacy
- Perhaps offer information about what's happening in other parts of the world with regard to legislation and practices.
- Provide an online listing of cowshares such as RAWMI does
- Raise money to provide free "Dairy Quality Kits" (see <http://www.dairyquality.com>) to all your agisters.
- Recipes sharing
- Support the already-in-existence cowshares.
- There is a great deal of "prejudice" against goats' milk, as well as misinformation. People typically think goat milk tastes "bad" or "strong". Many have had unfortunate experiences with drinking goat milk that has been mishandled and this tends to perpetuate the myths around their milk. Also, North American society tends to be entrenched in consuming cows' milk. It would be great if the BCHA assisted and supported goat farmers in this area.
- They should mainly look at sustainability with self-support for emotional and physical health. Members should get help with communication techniques to help keep things moving and not get burned out.
- Would be great to be active on social media to help build the community and get the conversation out there. Topics such as food security and the preservation of agricultural land could connect other stakeholders with BCHA. It could also encourage those who have land or smaller amounts of livestock to participate in a movement that has benefits for all.

Advocacy: (11)

- BCHA could approach the veterinary community and advocate for lower rates for livestock. The Victoria area has some of the highest vet rates in ALL of North America, which makes it nearly impossible for active livestock farmers to be viable in this area.
- I think it's important to make your organization more well-known and visible.
- I think public awareness and education is very important.
- I would like to see someone/group push legislation to make raw milk legal!
- Lobby government for a legal method to sell Raw Milk.
- Lobby government for change and the democratization of the distribution of raw milk in Canada.
- Lobby the vet association to provide large animal vets in all areas because some areas don't have one.
- Meet in-person with Ministry of Health and Health Authority people and tell them that we are not going to go away, be persecuted away, and that we are offering to work with them. Ask them to put a moratorium on ALL investigations and prosecutions and partner with them in a pilot project showing them that raw milk is SAFE.
- Organize and manage petitions which keep our interests and the food freedom in the front of government.

- Push Govt to bring BC into the modern age by have milk laws like California where it has been legal for more than 20 yrs
- The most important would be to advocate for food freedom and autonomy. I would like to see more advocacy for changes in raw/fresh milk in BC. We are the strictest area in all of North America and there is absolutely no need for that.

Education for our Community: (10)

- Animal welfare, educate about the needs of cows / goats. Information on financial commitment of keeping these animals. Not suitable for everyone to have a cow in the backyard, not nice to see poorly kept animals.
- Bring up Mark McAfee to tour B.C. and give in-person training to any willing farmers.
- Educate shareholders about food safety and their responsibilities.
- For the most part, connecting potential herdshare members doesn't seem like the most crucial work - happens through word of mouth already quite well
- Information/seminars related to other farming practices.
- Primarily education (e.g. for the public, knowing about raw milk benefits) & networking, especially to support our farmers who seem to be vulnerable/on the receiving end of legal bullshit etc.
- Provide materials so shareholders or the public so they can speak with clarity to their politicians, and give the politicians accurate information in order to move towards regulation.
- Publish a booklet to teach consumers about their own responsibility in milk handling.
- Start an Online Magazine through the Apple iBooks store to develop your position as experts in the raw milk industry.
- Workshops.

Public Relations and Public Education (9)

- Coordinate press releases with existing raw milk advocacy groups for greatest possible impact.
- Educating the general public on the safety of raw milk would be a great start.
- Educating the public (non-shareholders) about food freedom.
- Education of the general public seems a hugely important piece of the puzzle to me. There are still so many unfounded fears about unpasteurized products, and even my friends that are fairly savvy are invariably surprised when I give them run-down on how pasteurization came to be government mandated and what we lose (health-wise) when we consume pasteurized products over fresh ones. I think the label "raw" is misleading, as evidenced in the Portlandia skit where they spoof on milk alternatives in funny enough fashion but then out of left field comes a spoof on "raw" milk and it's pretty much just a big glass of blood. I mention this television skit as a kind of testament to what sorts of imagery is conjured up for people when they hear raw milk. Really, it should just be called "farm fresh". I know that term is overused as a tagline on various industrial not-at-all fresh products, but I wish to reclaim it somehow. Grass-fed meat products have attained a status as a premium product in the eyes of the consumer and the way forward (or back, depending on how you look at it!) to reviving sustainable/ethical agricultural practices. Raw milk is a long way from achieving that status because it is in a somewhat different category, but I think if there was some way to make it a goal to advocate for it along the same lines that grass-fed champions have done, to ride in the wake of that success, that would be a path of less resistance.
- I think public education is really important! I also think discussing and continually assessing standards for quality milk production gives people a lot of faith. I think hearing more about how raw milk is produced and consumed and viewed in other places (like Europe) is interesting for herd share members to know about and discuss.

- Media relations is key, based on old (Weston Price, etc.) and new research and exposing surveys of current users as to health and satisfaction levels rather than letting the industry-controlled media control the message of raw milk and dairy.
- Public education/outreach.
- Somehow liaise with the community, to help introduce raw milk to people who haven't tried it.
- Sponsor ads in major provincial newspapers that advocate consumer choice with educational points on raw milk and the history of pasteurization

Cooperation: (4)

- Coordinate with other organic healthy food providers
- Develop standards of operation in conjunction with any similar associations across Canada - and then a licencing and inspection service to uphold them.
- International co-operation
- Perhaps liaising with herdshares in other provinces

Research: (2)

- I don't think that BCHA should conduct research, but they should allow third-parties to do research with their herds and the people involved. We want to make sure the research is bias-free.
- Research should be done but by independent, non-biased firms.

Legal Defence: (1)

- Raw milk producers legal defence fund

Question 7. "What should BCHA NOT do?"

Court cases:

- Collecting money for lawsuits
- Do not fund court cases - this is a useless activity.
- Fundraising for law suits that are lost causes or unrelated to actual raw milk production issues (for example, contempt of court cases)

Other:

- Adverse information against cowshares
- Do not charge membership fees of any type - you only discourage people from joining.
- Don't cut down commercial farmers and their practices, we have to live amongst them,
- Don't try to convince anyone to try raw milk
- I think that it would be more fiscally reasonable to educate and promote through already existing group and webpages like farmers market, local growers association, organic groups, sustainable farming group, home organic deliveries services,

- If you lobby you will waste time energy and be disappointed at the slow results, concentrate on running a great business
- Lecturing on the health benefits of raw milk; we should focus on the fact that shareholders are simply choosing to eat the food they want, and stay away from sharing potentially controversial/incorrect information which could discredit the organization.
- Pro-religious propaganda
- Regulate prices.
- Stay away from statements that cannot be verified by independent scientific evidence. Point out the risks associated with drinking raw milk as well as the benefits. Explain possible sources of contamination, including those that shareholders may inadvertently introduce.
- To receive government money in whatever form.
- You should not fix pricing as expenses may be higher in some areas than other.

Question 8: "Other Comments, Opinions, Suggestions, etc."

Comments expressing support for what we are doing:

- All the ideas above are great - but some are more important than others. I'm excited that there's this new organization forming!
- An educational, advisory, advocacy body is a really great idea. Thanks for taking this on. I am unable to volunteer at the moment, but would consider doing so at a future time. thnx
- Awesome! This is so needed. Time to take down the big ag companies and let the little guys have some freedom.
- Good luck in this endeavour.
- Great work and initiative here - well done!
- I think the above covers the main services/activities.
- I think you covered it!
- Keep up the great work. This is about our right to choose.
- Nice work. Wish I had time to contribute substantially. :)
- Since I checked all the above, that already seems like an awful lot of work to do!
- Some great ideas. I hope you can implement some of them.
- Thank you so much!
- Thank you!
- Thanks for this work. I Love the mentoring aspect.
- Thanks!
- That's a pretty comprehensive list above, I think.
- The above sound great.
- The list above is good.
- This is a critical moment... press on!

Comments regarding access to raw milk:

- How do I join a herdshare group in my area?
- I am excited that we are working towards real milk in my fridge!
- I just want to drink milk I buy directly from the farmer.
- I just want to drink raw milk.
- I live in Merritt BC, I would like to find a herdshare to join.
- I wish I had known about the availability and safety of raw milk a long time ago. I have spent the last 30 years being unable to have any dairy. Now that I have my raw milk, I am finally able to have milk products again and I am ecstatic!!!

- I'm grateful to have access to raw milk, to support natural farming, agriculture, and food. I believe all people deserve access to whole food and protection from medicated, pesticided food and exogenous hormones. Thank you.
- Just do what you can, but I need milk! :))
- More people could access the share programme
- The tricky part is being of genuine benefit for those of us who are simply trying to have our reasonable, free, and easy access to the milk/products and beef while at the same time being a very public 'face and voice' for those values and systems. So can the two co-exist without endangering the base point for best practices in our activities.... and...hence not political lightning rod 'on the radar' for legislative and governmental gamesmanship? When, both are needed? The public voice and advocacy as well as the best practices privately....
- While I believe that helping potential shareholders find a herdshare to join could be very beneficial to both parties, there needs to be a system in place to protect the farmers from spies.
- Would like to have milk on more flexible terms.

Other:

- Have standards for "clean milk" and get agisters to meet them.
- Cannot be something for everybody
- I know it's hard now for that, because people are so prosecuted, but I have more than just health reasons for drinking raw milk and that's the community and human element as well.
- I love the raw milk and that is available. Even though I answered yes to all of the services in #5, keeping a low profile may keep the herdshare going, so I am personally concerned about pushing the profile higher and making too many demands at one time. Just saying.
- Stick to the basics