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September 15, 2005

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Mr. Gordon S Watson

Dear Mr. Watson:

The Honourable George Abbott, Minister of Health, has asked me to respond to your letter of July 8, 2005, directed to the Honourable Wallace Oppal, Attorney General of British Columbia.

You ask for clarification of the government's policy regarding the distribution of raw milk, and specifically whether several people can jointly own a cow or a herd of cows and share the unpasteurized raw milk from that cow or herd.

The *Milk Industry Act* and the Milk Industry Standards Regulation currently regulate raw milk. This legislation prohibits the sale or supply of any dairy product (including raw milk) unless it has been pasteurized in accordance with the Act and Regulations. This means that raw, unpasteurized milk cannot be sold or supplied to anyone other than a licensed dairy processing plant.

It is Ministry policy to consider that raw milk is not sold or supplied if it is consumed by a person who owns and has direct care and control of the cow – in other words, a person who knows how the animal and the raw milk is being handled. In these circumstances, the person who consumes the raw milk is considered to have adequate information to assess the risks associated with that particular raw milk. This narrow policy exception does not apply to raw milk that is sold or supplied to someone who is not directly involved in the care and control of the cow and the raw milk.

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While I acknowledge that there may be jurisdictions that permit the sale or supply of unpasteurized raw milk to people who do not directly care for or control the cow or cows that produced it, that is not the policy in British Columbia.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your concerns, and the time you have taken to bring this matter to the Minister's attention.

Yours truly,

C
By *Sue Bedford*

for Ron Duffell
A/Executive Director
Health Protection

pc: Honourable Wallace Oppal
Attorney General of British Columbia

Honourable Pat Bell
Minister of Agriculture and Lands

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