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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- MILK SANITATION CODE -- SANITATION IN  
FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

Introduced By: Representatives Place, Fascia, and Chippendale

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Sections 21-2-2, 21-2-3, 21-2-5, 21-2-7, 21-2-23, 21-2-29, 21-2-30, 21-2-31,  
2           21-2-32 and 21-2-44 of the General Laws in Chapter 21-2 entitled "Milk Sanitation Code" are  
3           hereby amended to read as follows:

4           **21-2-2. Declaration of policy.**

5           Milk is recognized to be one of the most perfect foods afforded by nature. It is unique in  
6           that its consumption in adequate quantities is essential to the nutritional well-being of the  
7           individual; but if its production and distribution are not properly safeguarded, it may be  
8           instrumental in the transmission of diseases infectious to people. It is declared to be the policy of  
9           the state that, for the protection of the health and welfare of the people of the state of Rhode Island,  
10          the environmental conditions surrounding the production, handling, transportation, distribution,  
11          and sale of milk and milk products shall be to protect the public health and to provide consumers  
12          with products that are identified in such a way as to promote honesty and fair dealing in the best  
13          interests of the consumers. Specifically, it is declared to be the policy of the state to provide:

14               (1) That the people of Rhode Island shall have a supply of milk adequate to their needs and  
15               demands under all conditions.

16               (2) That milk provided for consumers within the state of Rhode Island shall be of good  
17               quality; shall be safe for human consumption; shall contain no live bacteria capable of transmitting  
18               disease to people; shall contain adequate nutritional components; and shall be free of adulteration.

1 (3) That milk sold or produced in Rhode Island shall come from healthy cows or goats.

2 (4) That milk sold or produced in Rhode Island shall be produced on farms having  
3 standards and conditions of sanitation adequate to ensure production of milk that is safe and of  
4 good quality.

5 (5) That milk sold or produced in Rhode Island shall be produced, processed, and handled  
6 by personnel free from any communicable disease.

7 (6) That milk to be consumed in the state of Rhode Island shall, at all stages in its travel  
8 from animal to ultimate consumer, be transported in equipment and/or packages that shall be  
9 designed, filled, operated, maintained, and emptied to prevent the introduction and/or propagation  
10 of bacteria, dirt, or any other foreign substances.

11 (7) That all milk sold in Rhode Island shall be handled and processed under conditions of  
12 good sanitation and shall be finally packaged free from contamination, dirt, or any other foreign  
13 substances and/or adulteration.

14 (8) That ~~all~~ raw milk may be sold within the state of Rhode Island. ~~shall be, except as~~  
15 ~~specifically authorized by this chapter, pasteurized~~

16 (9) That pasteurization of milk shall be by a recognized method of pasteurizing adequate  
17 to destroy bacteria capable of transmitting disease to people. Provided, that a physician may  
18 authorize an individual sale of goat milk directly from producer to consumer by written, signed  
19 prescription.

20 ~~(9)~~(10) That the branding or labeling of packages in which all milk sold in the state of  
21 Rhode Island shall be delivered to the consumer shall state the grade of milk packaged; may state  
22 any special attributes of the milk; and that all statements made on any packaging labels shall not be  
23 false or misleading.

24 ~~(10)~~(11) That this state shall cooperate in the preparation and promulgation of any set of  
25 standards, regulations, statutes, or other means of control of sanitation in the production,  
26 transportation, handling, processing, and distribution of milk, or any one or more of them,  
27 according to a uniform system of requirements to be adopted alike by all or a majority of the states  
28 that contribute milk to the Rhode Island market.

29 **21-2-3. Definitions.**

30 ~~(1)~~(1) “Cream” means the liquid milk product high in fat from milk, which may have been  
31 adjusted by adding to it: milk, concentrated milk, dry whole milk, skim milk, or nonfat dry milk.

32 ~~(2)~~(2) “Director” means the director of the department of health, unless otherwise  
33 specified.

34 ~~(3)~~(3) “Goat milk” is the lacteal secretion, practically free from colostrum, obtained by the

1 complete milking of healthy goats. The word “milk” is interpreted to include goat milk.

2 ~~(4)~~ (4) “Grade A” means milk, cream, and products of milk and cream, that comply with  
3 the applicable provisions of regulations established by the director.

4 ~~(5)~~ (5) “Milk” means the lacteal secretion, practically free from colostrum, obtained by  
5 complete milking of one or more healthy cows. Milk that is in final package form for beverage use  
6 shall contain not less than eight and one-fourth percent (8.25%) milk solids not fat and not less than  
7 three and one-fourth percent (3.25%) milk fat. Milk may have been adjusted by separating part of  
8 the milk fat from it or by adding cream, concentrated milk, dry whole milk, skim milk, concentrated  
9 skim milk, or nonfat dry milk to it. The milk may be homogenized.

10 (6) "Raw milk" means milk that is neither pasteurized nor homogenized and comes directly  
11 from a cow.

12 ~~(f) “Raw milk for pasteurization” means grade “A” milk for pasteurization and raw~~  
13 ~~products of milk that comply with the sanitary standards for their production, transportation,~~  
14 ~~receiving, handling, storage, processing, distribution, and sale as established by the director.~~

15 ~~(7)~~ (7) “Raw milk cheese” means any cheese manufactured from raw milk that meets United  
16 States food and drug administration (USFDA) standards for cheeses set forth in 21 C.F.R. 133 and  
17 has not undergone the process of pasteurization and that contains, as appropriate for the cheese,  
18 generally recognized as safe (GRAS) and suitable ingredients as defined in 21 C.F.R. 184.

19 (8) “Raw milk for pasteurization” means grade “A” milk for pasteurization and raw  
20 products of milk that comply with the sanitary standards for their production, transportation,  
21 receiving, handling, storage, processing, distribution, and sale as established by the director.

22 **21-2-5. Analysis of raw milk by private milk laboratories.**

23 (a) Each milk plant engaged in processing milk shall, at least once in each calendar month,  
24 either through its own agents or through its milk haulers, collect, preserve, and submit to a private  
25 milk laboratory for analysis a sample or samples of the milk of each producer supplying milk to  
26 the milk plant. The laboratory shall determine the bacterial counts of the sample, both as raw milk  
27 and after pasteurization in the laboratory, the determination to be made by the standard plate count  
28 method, as well as a determination for any harmful substances that the director may by regulation  
29 require, and shall keep a record of these findings for a period of not less than one year following  
30 the findings which shall be open to inspection by the director or any milk inspector. The laboratory  
31 shall make a report to the milk plant submitting the sample with respect to each determination.

32 (b) The director may by regulation require any milk plant to submit samples of milk after  
33 pasteurization in the plant to a private laboratory for analysis for the purpose of ascertaining  
34 bacterial counts or the presence of harmful substances or organisms as the director may require,

1 and the laboratory shall make its reports on its analysis available to the director in the same manner  
2 as with respect to samples of raw milk submitted by producers.

3 (c) Regulations promulgated by the director pursuant to this section requiring sampling by  
4 a private milk laboratory shall not impose an unreasonable burden on milk plants. The director may  
5 in his or her discretion engage private laboratories to perform any additional tests that he or she  
6 may require in the event the expense of the tests constitutes an unreasonable burden on milk plants.  
7 The director may by regulation require producers of [raw milk and](#) raw milk cheese to submit  
8 samples of unpasteurized milk for said analysis.

9 **21-2-7. Permits.**

10 (a) It shall be unlawful for any milk producer whose dairy farm is located wholly or partly  
11 in this state to sell or to offer to sell milk, [raw milk](#), or milk products or to have milk stored for sale  
12 who does not possess at all times a Rhode Island producer's permit from the director.

13 (b) It shall be unlawful for any milk hauler to transport any milk or milk products to any  
14 milk plant in the state of Rhode Island or to transport any milk [or raw milk](#) in this state destined for  
15 sale in this state unless he or she shall at all times possess a Rhode Island milk hauler's permit from  
16 the director.

17 (c) It shall be unlawful for any person to operate a milk plant in the state of Rhode Island  
18 who does not possess a Rhode Island milk plant permit from the director with respect to each plant  
19 located in Rhode Island.

20 (d) It shall be unlawful for any milk distributor to sell or offer to sell milk, [raw milk](#), or  
21 milk products, including raw milk cheese, within the state of Rhode Island unless he or she shall at  
22 all times possess a milk distributor's permit from the director.

23 (e) It shall be unlawful for any milk hauler to transport any milk, [raw milk](#), or milk products  
24 from any point outside the state into the state of Rhode Island for sale or processing in this state or  
25 for any milk plant located in Rhode Island to process any milk or milk products which come from  
26 any point outside the state of Rhode Island or for any milk distributor to sell any milk or milk  
27 products within this state which come from any point outside this state, unless:

28 (1) Every producer who produces any part of the milk, [raw milk](#), or milk products shall  
29 have been inspected and shall from time to time be inspected with the same minimum frequency,  
30 to the same degree, and according to the same requirements as provided in this chapter or any  
31 regulations promulgated under this chapter in the case of Rhode Island producers;

32 (2) Every vehicle in which the milk [or raw milk](#) is transported to the plant where processed  
33 shall from time to time be inspected with the same minimum frequency, to the same degree, and  
34 according to the same requirements as provided in this chapter or any regulations promulgated

1 pursuant to this chapter in the case of Rhode Island milk hauler permittees; and

2 (3) The operator of each milk plant located outside the state of Rhode Island where any  
3 part of the milk is processed at all times possesses an out-of-state milk plant permit from the  
4 director.

5 (f) It shall be unlawful for any person located in the state of Rhode Island to sell or offer  
6 for sale to any milk hauler or milk plant, or for any milk plant to pasteurize any raw milk for  
7 pasteurization, any part of which shall be used for grade A pasteurized milk or for any grade A  
8 milk product, unless the person at all times is in possession of a Rhode Island grade A producer's  
9 permit.

10 (g) The fees for the following permits referred to in this section shall be as set forth in §  
11 23-1-54:

12 (1) In-state milk processors;

13 (2) Out-of-state milk processors; and

14 (3) Milk [and raw milk](#) distributors.

15 (h) Milk [and raw milk](#) producers and milk haulers shall be exempt from permit fees.

16 **21-2-23. Director empowered to make regulations.**

17 (a) The director of health is authorized to promulgate any regulations that are necessary to  
18 carry into effect the provisions of this chapter, which shall include, but not be limited to, providing  
19 for: (1) standards of identity, labeling requirements, maintaining standards for milk, [raw milk](#), and  
20 milk products sold or offered for sale in final package forms; (2) standards for the production,  
21 transportation, receiving, handling, storage, processing, distributions, and sale of [raw milk, and](#) raw  
22 milk for pasteurization and products of raw milk, including all pertinent sanitary standards and  
23 uniform minimum requirement for inspection of dairy farms, milk plants and receiving stations;  
24 and may in like manner amend, modify or repeal those rules and regulations which shall be  
25 consistent with the provisions of the Grade "A" Pasteurized Milk Ordinance 1978  
26 recommendations of the U.S. Public Health Service/Food and Drug Administration, 1983  
27 Revisions, which shall become upon the passage of this act the rules and regulations under this  
28 chapter in accordance with § 21-2-2(10).

29 (b) The adoption and amendment of regulations in the future shall be in accordance with  
30 chapter 35 of title 42; provided, that amendments to the Grade "A" Pasteurized Milk Ordinance  
31 adopted by the interstate milk shippers conference shall become a part of the regulations under this  
32 chapter. Provided, that a person adversely affected by any regulation may, within thirty (30) days,  
33 file with the director, in writing, those objections to a regulation automatically adopted which stays  
34 the effect of the regulation. If no substantial objections are received and no hearing is requested

1 within thirty (30) days after publication of a notice of the adoption of a regulation, it shall be  
2 effective as of the date it was adopted by the interstate milk shippers conference. When automatic  
3 adoption is stayed by a timely objection, the director, after notice, shall conduct a public hearing in  
4 accordance with the provisions of chapter 35 of title 42. The director of health is authorized to  
5 adopt any other regulations for milk, [raw milk](#), and other related products that he or she deems  
6 necessary in accordance with authority granted under this chapter, chapters 27 and 31 of this title  
7 and § 23-1-18(5).

8 (c) The director shall publish a notice of the adoption in a newspaper having general  
9 circulation throughout the state.

10 **21-2-29. Standards to be maintained.**

11 All milk, [raw milk](#), and milk products as defined in this chapter which are to be shipped,  
12 brought, carried, or transported into Rhode Island for sale, distribution, use, or processing in this  
13 state, shall come from animals that are of a substantially equal or higher health status as applied to  
14 brucellosis, tuberculosis, or other diseases as those animals located within Rhode Island from which  
15 milk is produced for sale, distribution, use, or processing.

16 **21-2-30. Information to be furnished to director.**

17 Every person engaged in the business of producing, handling, transporting, processing,  
18 packaging, selling, or distributing milk [and raw milk](#) in Rhode Island shall upon request furnish the  
19 director, whenever requested by the director, the following information: (1) full name and place of  
20 business; (2) number of quarts of milk handled weekly by him or her or it; and (3) the names and  
21 addresses of all producers, milk haulers or milk plants supplying milk to him or her. Every milk  
22 plant holding a Rhode Island milk plant permit shall report coincidentally with and by means of a  
23 copy of any report which he or she makes, or is required to make, to the federal milk marketing  
24 administrator whenever he or she shall have added or dropped a milk producer.

25 **21-2-31. Labeling of containers of milk and milk products.**

26 (a) All containers in or from which milk, [raw milk](#), or milk products are sold or offered for  
27 sale shall bear a label in accordance with regulations adopted under this chapter.

28 (b) All labels or marks shall be displayed in the manner and include any matters as shall be  
29 prescribed by the rules and regulations of the director; provided, nothing contained in this section  
30 shall be construed to empower the director to disapprove of or to change any dealer from using the  
31 common name of his or her firm, or of any registered trademark, brand, or trade name customarily  
32 used by him or her in the identification of any or all of his or her products.

33 (c) Samples of all labels or marks to be used on containers of milk, [raw milk](#), or milk  
34 products shall be submitted for approval as to color, size of lettering, and matter. No misleading

1 mark or words shall be placed on any container of milk, [raw milk](#), or milk products. The cap or  
2 cover of all containers of milk, [raw milk](#), or milk products must cover the pouring lip to at least its  
3 largest diameter.

4 **21-2-32. Labeling as to breed of cows.**

5 (a) The labels of milk [or raw milk](#) containers may carry in addition to one of the above  
6 grade names, but set apart from those grade names, the name of the breed of cows producing the  
7 milk [and raw milk](#) or the registered trade name or trademark for the breed; provided containers so  
8 labeled contain only milk produced from the breed named.

9 (b) The label of milk [and raw milk](#) product containers may carry in addition to one of the  
10 terms defined in § 21-2-31 which correctly describes the contents, but set apart from that term, the  
11 name of the breed of cows producing the milk from which the milk product was derived, or the  
12 registered trade name or trademark for the breed; provided that containers so labeled contain only  
13 a milk product derived from milk produced from the breed named.

14 **21-2-44. State statutory provisions and rules paramount to local.**

15 Whenever there is any provision of this chapter or any other statute defining a particular  
16 kind, type, or grade of milk, [raw milk](#), or milk product or setting forth requirements as to the  
17 chemical or bacteriological components, standards, or requirements for that kind, type, or grade of  
18 milk, [raw milk](#), or milk product, or specifying standards or methods for the processing, treatment,  
19 or packaging or labeling of the milk, [raw milk](#), or milk product, or when the director shall have  
20 lawfully established a definition or requirements by regulation, the provisions of that chapter,  
21 statute, or regulation shall supersede any definition or requirements for it which may be contained  
22 in any city or town ordinance or in the regulations of any city or town office or department, whether  
23 made under a statute or an ordinance.

24 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO FOOD AND DRUGS -- MILK SANITATION CODE -- SANITATION IN  
FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

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- 1 This act would permit and legalize the sale of raw milk.
- 2 This act would take effect upon passage.

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