NEWS RELEASE
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Public Health Officials Investigate Campylobacter Infections Linked to Raw Milk

Colorado Springs – The Pueblo City-County Health Department, El Paso County Public Health and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment are jointly investigating an ongoing outbreak of Campylobacter infections linked to raw milk from Larga Vista Ranch in Pueblo County. The agencies are warning consumers that drinking unpasteurized milk can pose severe health risks and there is no method to assure the safety of raw milk.

Health officials have identified 12 confirmed and eight probable human cases of campylobacter since Aug. 1. The most recent onset of illness was September 16. All the individuals who were sickened reported drinking raw milk from Larga Vista Ranch. All 20 confirmed and probable campylobacter cases live in Pueblo and El Paso counties.

Campylobacter is a bacteria that is destroyed only by pasteurization. Symptoms of campylobacter infection include fever, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting. People experiencing these symptoms should consult with their health care provider.

The state health department notified approximately 175 people who are participants in the Larga Vista cow share operation on Sept. 8 and will do so again today. Cow-share operations allow individuals to buy a share of a cow and in return receive raw, unpasteurized milk.

People are advised not to consume raw milk and raw milk products from Larga Vista and to discard any such products in their homes. The risk of getting sick from drinking raw milk is greater for infants and young children, the elderly, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Some of those sickened in this outbreak were not shareholders, but obtained raw milk from others who were. Shareholders are not permitted to redistribute the raw milk they receive.

The sale of raw milk for human consumption is illegal in Colorado. However, people may legally obtain raw milk by joining a herdshare (ownership of a cow, goat, or herd) program. Shareholders cannot distribute raw milk further.

For more information visit www.elpasocountyhealth.org, or Pueblo County residents may call 719-583-4307.

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