

2025 Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) Infection Outbreak Linked to Raw Milk Consumption

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Between May 2 and May 5, 2025, three Washington residents from Cowlitz County (1), Clark County (1) and Pierce County (1) became ill with infections due to Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (also called STEC). All reported drinking raw milk produced by Cowlitz Hill Guernseys L.L.C. (Salkum, WA).

A routine Cowlitz Hill Guernseys milk sample collected by WSDA on May 5, 2025 tested negative for STEC. Because of the negative test result, no recall has been recommended. WSDA routinely samples all retail raw milk operations monthly.

WSDA is conducting a full investigation of the firm's operations. The results of that investigation are not yet available. Cowlitz Hill Guernseys is cooperating with the illness investigation.

Raw milk (also called unpasteurized milk) has not been heated to kill harmful germs that can cause illness in humans. Harmful germs that are naturally present in cow manure can sometimes get into (contaminate) raw milk and make people who drink the milk sick. Some of the germs that can contaminate raw milk are STEC, *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, *Listeria* and others. For more information see [risks of drinking raw milk](#).

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) regulates licensed raw milk dairies in Washington and provides technical guidance, conducts inspections and tests raw milk/cream for germs that can cause human illness once a month. Even with these safeguards in place, raw milk from licensed dairies occasionally tests positive for pathogens and/or causes illness outbreaks.

Learn more about how [WSDA regulates dairy](#).

In Washington

Quick Facts

- **Cases:** 3
- **Hospitalizations:** 1
- **Deaths:** 0
- **Status:** Ongoing

- **Recall:** No

Advice to Consumers

- Children under the age of 5, those who are pregnant, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems should not drink raw milk. These groups are at higher risk for severe illness and complications (including pregnancy complications) if they develop infections with bacteria that can contaminate raw milk.
- People who choose to consume raw (unpasteurized) milk or cream should only purchase products produced by a WSDA licensed raw milk dairy. These dairies are required to follow practices that reduce the risk that germs will contaminate milk and cream. They are also inspected by the WSDA and their animals and milk and cream are routinely tested for germs that cause human illness. Licensing does not entirely remove the risk that raw milk or cream might be contaminated.
- Call a healthcare provider right away if you have these symptoms after drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk or cream:
 - Bloody diarrhea
 - Diarrhea lasting 3 days or more