

PRESS RELEASE

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New milk research finds infectious bacteria survives pasteurization

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2004, PHOENIX, ARIZONA – In a late-breaking session of the International Association for Food Protection, Dr. Jay Ellingson of the Marshfield Clinic Laboratories, Marshfield, WI, USA presented the Clinic's recent findings that the milk we drink is contaminated with an organism that has been implicated as a suspected cause of Crohn's disease – *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *Paratuberculosis* (MAP).

Dr. Ellingson reported that in a test of 702 samples from three of the five top milk-producing states, California, Minnesota, Wisconsin, at least 2.8 percent of the samples contained MAP that was alive and capable of multiplying. The Wisconsin data confirms research findings in the UK where live MAP was cultured from British retail milk as well.

MAP is well-known as the cause of Johne's disease in cattle and sheep, and MAP infection is rampant in dairy herds nationwide. Johne's is on a steady increase, causing concern among dairy producers. Johne's can affect many other animals including primates. In Johne's, MAP causes chronic inflammation of the intestine and spreads throughout the body of the animal resulting in a wasting disease with no practical cure.

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Crohn's disease is a chronic inflammatory disease of the intestine causing wasting in people and is suffered by more than half a million Americans. The number of Crohn's disease patients continues to grow, with an estimated 20,000 Americans, primarily young people, joining the ranks every year. The rate of new cases is rising, painting a deeply concerning picture for American families.

Professor John Hermon-Taylor, Chairman, Department of Surgery, St. George's Hospital Medical School, London, England, is convinced that there is a solid association between MAP and Crohn's. "Careful research in our own laboratories and others in the United States and elsewhere shows unequivocally that when the tests are done correctly almost everyone with Crohn's disease is found to be infected with MAP. MAP causes chronic inflammation of the intestine in animals and of course it is doing the same thing in people. MAP infection is difficult to eradicate but we already know that anti-MAP treatment can heal a substantial proportion of people whose lives have been ruined by Crohn's disease."

Cheryl Miller, PARA's Co-Executive Director says: "The dairy industry has been well aware of the MAP-Crohn's connection for decades. Instead of investing in research to solve the problem, they have chosen instead to launch clever marketing campaigns directed at children – with the full knowledge that MAP may be causing Crohn's in those children. People's lives are ruined by this devastating disease. Children are suffering."

"The milk industry and the governmental agencies FDA and USDA have been insisting that milk is safe because MAP supposedly doesn't survive pasteurization," said PARA's Stephen Merkel. "For years they ran simulation studies but wouldn't test real-world milk. They argued that their simulations showed 'no problem.' The Marshfield findings settle the debate that's been raging for years. MAP is in the U.S. milk supply."

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Alan Kennedy, an Irish member of PARA, commented on the past UK research. “When the news appeared that MAP was alive in retail milk in the UK, there was plenty of media attention, but no consumer backlash. Sales of milk and dairy products were not affected. This was primarily because Europeans had faith in the Agencies responsible for Food Safety. The responsible agencies conducted the required research, they openly published the results, they formed policies by asking for input from all stakeholders, and initiated rational and effective policies, all open and in the public eye. The European Dairy Industry is now in a stronger position to face increasing global competition for markets. I hope that the American agencies realize that soon and act to eliminate MAP from dairy and beef products. It genuinely is in everybody’s best social and economic interest.”

PARA’S Co-Executive Director, Karen Meyer, states: “The Marshfield retail supermarket milk study is long overdue. Dr. Jay Ellingson is to be commended for undertaking this controversial research which undoubtedly has had dairy folks worried since its inception. Now that PARA’s position has been vindicated, I predict that there will be a lot of milk-mustache wiping at the FDA. It is a tragedy that our children are exposed to this dangerous pathogen every day. American consumers will be watching closely to see how the dairy industry and FDA deal with this issue. Will they finally takes measures to protect the public by aggressively attempting to get MAP out of the food chain, or will they continue to try to bury the problem as they have done for decades? Time will tell.”

Paratuberculosis Awareness and Research Association, Inc. (PARA) is a non-profit organization of Crohn’s disease patients, their families and friends, dedicated to raising awareness of the zoonotic (disease-causing) potential of MAP, urging governmental agencies to address the control and eventual eradication of MAP from the environment, particularly from foods of animal origin, and advocating funding for research which will determine the role played by **MAP** in causing Crohn’s disease. Since 1997 PARA has been urging the dairy industry and FDA to test the retail milk for the presence of MAP.

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For more information about MAP and Crohn's disease, visit:

PARA's website - www.crohns.org.

International Association for Paratuberculosis - www.paratuberculosis.org

Crohn's Disease Information Center - www.shafran.net/crohn

Johne's Information Center - www.johnes.org

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