

HERD SHARE INFORMATION

It is illegal to for anyone to sell raw milk in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Each state makes up its own guidelines and the Commonwealth of Virginia has chosen to follow the FDA regulations regarding the sale of raw milk and raw milk products. A Share Program is legal in the Commonwealth of Virginia, there are no regulations regarding the consumption of raw milk from an animal that the individual owns or owns a stake in. <http://www.westonaprice.org> and <http://www.realmilk.com> are two websites with valuable information about the benefits of drinking raw milk and the availability of raw milk by individual state.

Why herd shares and what are they?

A herd share enables you to enjoy the freshest, most natural milk available. Unless you have a cow in your backyard, you need a herd share to enjoy raw milk in Virginia.

It works like this: We do all the hard work - milking, grazing, doctoring, etc. We do all this for a boarding fee of just \$33.50 a month, per share. It's that simple.

At the onset, you pay a one-time fee of \$75 for your portion of the herd. A case of jars per share is \$15 (that's 6, ½ gal jars). You will need 6 jars per share. You can provide your own if you wish, but they must be the same size and shape as they ones we use. This is for the rotation between your home, the drop site, and our shelves. You will pick up milk and drop off empty clean jars. We drop off milk and pick up your empty jars to put on our shelves until it's time to fill them again. It looks like this monthly:

1 share (one gallon per week):

\$33.50 Boarding Fee

\$10.00 delivery fee Total: \$43.50

2 shares (2 gallons per week):

\$67.00 Boarding Fee

\$10.00 delivery fee

Total: \$77.00

Start up costs include your herd purchase, jars, first months boarding fee and delivery. After that you settle into the routine Boarding Fee and delivery due at the beginning of each month. To get started just contact us by e-mail (Info@elimspringsfarm.com), or give us a call (804-931-8197). Simply let us know how many shares you'd like, which drop site works best for you, and when you'd like to begin receiving milk. Once we have your initial payment and signed paperwork we'll get the deliveries coming!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is raw milk safe to drink?

If you search the web for "raw milk" you will find many, many discussions on the topic of raw milk. I like Raw Milk Facts.com and RealMilk.com. Much of the "other" information on raw milk comes from misunderstandings and political pressure from the commercial dairy industry. When everyone had a family milk cow who grazed on grass, no one worried about "bad milk" because the "good bacteria" in grass-fed milk outweighs the "bad bacteria" and actually keeps the milk safe to drink. In fact this type of milk doesn't go bad, ever. It simply turns to cheese.

When milking made its big move to commercial dairies, the diet of the cow switched from mostly grass to mostly grain. The change in diet and the crowded commercial dairy conditions suddenly made raw milk a health hazard. The actual make-up of the milk had changed and it was now subject to having the "bad bacteria" take

over and make people sick. To preserve their large commercial dairies, the obvious solution was to pasteurize the milk. Pasteurized milk of course destroys all the bacteria (good and bad) and changes the protein structure of the milk. Now, a completely new product that many people suddenly couldn't digest (the beginning of milk allergies and lactose intolerance) and a product that rots. Obviously the dairy industry had to do a big sell to the consumer to get them to accept this different product, and many of us were raised still under the belief that only pasteurized milk is truly safe to drink. In fact, a backyard cow, fed primarily grass & hay and housed in a clean facility produces real milk that is perfectly safe to drink.

Who drinks Raw Milk?

Many people who cannot tolerate pasteurized milk are delighted to discover they have no trouble digesting raw milk, so many lactose intolerant people use raw milk. Other people find that the heavy lactobacillus content in raw milk (similar to what you find in commercial yogurt or cultured buttermilk) helps keep their digestive system running smoothly. Many people simply prefer the fuller taste of raw milk. Some people's doctors have suggested a raw diet and some people simply prefer to eat more natural foods and milk from cows without supplemental hormones.

Is your cow grass fed? Organic? Hormones? Antibiotics?

Our girls graze primarily on grass (hay in the winter). They get a small amount of grains and alfalfa pellets at the morning and evening milking as a treat and as a way to give them extra vitamins, protein and probiotics. We never use hormones and purchase our hay locally once we have depleted our stock. We never use chemicals on our pastures. We feel the girls' are healthier with regular small amounts of feed.

We treat our cows with natural, homeopathic or herbal remedies. As far as antibiotics - it is illegal for ANYONE (even commercial dairies) to release milk tainted with antibiotics into the milk supply. So no milk you ever drink from any source should contain antibiotics (people get this confused I think with the beef industry). If we ever have to treat an infection with antibiotics, we have to throw away the milk for 5 days (actually, we "throw" it to the dogs - they are thrilled!).

Why doesn't everyone have a backyard cow?

If you ever spent 5 minutes around a dairy cow, you may wonder the same thing. A dairy cow is the kindest, sweetest, gentlest animal on the planet. They want nothing more than to love and be loved. They are very smart, know their name, know which hand you hide the treats in, and know which songs they prefer during milk time (if you ever sing the "wrong" song, you get a tail in the face!). They love it when you find just that right "itchy" spot on their cheek to scratch and will groom the top of your head with a few "licks" while your milking them.

That's the good part. The other reality is that a milk cow is a lot of work. They have to be milked twice a day, 365 days a year. ALWAYS. No exceptions for holidays, illness, family business, blackouts, blizzards, thunderstorms, frigid cold or vacations. It's a big commitment to have a milk cow. Not only do you have to milk them, you have to feed and clean up after them. They eat a lot. About a bale or more of hay every day. They drink about 20 gallons of water a day, and they produce a tremendous amount of "organic fertilizer" every day.

But for your efforts, you not only get that special cow love, you also get all the milk, cream, butter, cheese, sour cream, buttermilk, cream cheese, ice cream, cottage cheese, etc. that your family can consume. Once you have a milk cow, it's hard to imagine life without one.

What kind of cow am I buying?

The cow in which you're buying a share is a purebred Jersey, Jersey Cross, Guernsey or Brown Swiss.

Is Jersey milk different than other milk?

Jersey cows are the most popular "family cow" for 2 reasons. First, they are the smallest of the milk cows (about 900 pounds) and secondly they have the highest butterfat content of any milk. Only the Guernsey comes in at a close second and we have five of those! The black and white Holstein you are probably familiar with (used by commercial milk producers) can produce twice the daily milk supply but has about half the butterfat of Jersey milk. Jersey's also have milk that is the most yellow in color due to the high content of very yellow butterfat. (you'll notice the butter from Jersey cream is very yellow).

Jersey milk also contains about 25% more protein than milk from a Holstein. Even "skimmed" Jersey milk tastes richer than whole milk from a Holstein due to the protein content.

How should I clean my jars?

1. Rinse all milk residue out of your jar with warm water and scrub the outer ring of the jar and lids. This is an important step.
2. Wash well with soap and hot water, or stick your jar in the dishwasher. It is preferred you wash the lid and rings by hand with hot soapy water. Your jars should smell fresh and clean and not like milk or cheese. If they have any odor other than clean, wash again. A re-wash fee of \$1.00, per jar, will be applied if your jars are not returned fresh and clean on a routine basis.
3. It's especially important that your jars and lids are completely dry before screwing the lid back on. If the jars are not dry, unwanted bacteria can grow in your jar. DO NOT leave paper towels in the jar to aid drying.
4. To err is human, so we understand if you occasionally forget to return your jars. But if you do, please return extra the next week. We keep track of missing jars, so if you haven't been returning them, we may not be able to fill your milk order. It may seem stingy, but with so many jars going out, losing them gets pricey. Also, please keep your milk jars for milk and your pickles and preserves in their own jars.

How should I handle the milk that is supplied to me?

Always keep your milk chilled. If you have some distance to travel, or stops to make before you arrive home, it's imperative that you keep your milk at refrigerator temperature until you return home. Take care that it's not left out for long at meal time.

Does freezing damage raw dairy products?

Freezing puts raw milk products to sleep and has little effect on the important health benefits that raw dairy products provide. Enzymes and bacteria are fully active when they awake for thawing. Some vitamins are reduced by trace amounts after being frozen. The flavor is affected slightly by this and is not always apparent. Thaw milk by placing the frozen milk in your fridge for a day or two. Slow thawing this way, in my opinion, gives good results.

When does a cow make milk?

A cow only produces milk after she's had a calf. Cows lactate for about 305 days, and "dry off" (do not produce milk) for the last 60 days before their next calf arrives. This way, your rejuvenated cow will calve with vigor and be healthy for the next season. This is why we run a herd share program rather than a cow share – otherwise you would have 2 months out of the year where you got no milk at all.

Where will my cow be kept?

The cows are located in Amelia, VA - and we welcome you to come and say hi to the cows! It's best schedule an appointment, as we keep a pretty full schedule.

How does the farmer collect and store milk?:

We are milking the cows by machine. After we milk the cows, we transfer the milk into glass containers and store in the refrigerator at 35-37 degrees until it is delivered.

Where are the milk drop sites?:

Currently we have 11 drop sites available which happen on Monday - Friday. For a complete up-to-date listing please see the "Order" page on our website - <http://elimspringsfarm.com/Order.html>

If I want to receive 2 or more gallons a week must I pay \$75 up front for each?

No, our herd buy in (\$75.00 fee) simply makes you a partial owner of the herd. Your monthly maintenance fee determines the amount of milk you will get. That is \$33.50 per gallon, per month.

If I miss a week for travel, etc. will I get a financial credit on my account?

No, we never issue financial credits for this. You are paying for the cows to be tended, fed, milked, etc. and that must be done every day regardless if you are around to drink the milk or not. We do however, production permitting, work with you on deliveries. If we can send a little more over a period of time we will. Say, an extra half gallon a week for a couple of weeks, etc.

What happens if I miss getting my jars back one week?

We will send milk in plastic disposable containers. They are .50 cents per half & .75 cents per gallon jug.

What other dairy products do you provide?

As of this writing we offer, production permitting, yogurt, cream and colostrum. Drinking milk is always the priority however, so unless we have a lot of surplus we won't offer cream. Our goal is to keep yogurt going, but again, we will not make yogurt before we short someone on their milk. Each item has a handling fee associated with it. Prices will be shared when products are available.

How is billing handled?

Invoicing is done at the beginning of each month. Invoices are emailed out to everyone. You may either pay by check (or cash or money order) by mailing it in or leaving it at the drop site in the envelope provided. Alternatively you can take part in our Draft program which draws the money from your checking account about one week after invoicing is done. There is no cost to you for this service.

How are communications handled between the farm & share holders?

Email as much as possible. We use a mailing program (iContact) to send bulk emails to the whole list, we'll send individual messages from our computers & all invoicing is delivered by email. With the large number of share holders we have it is a must to be able to communicate with all at once. Phone calls (or texting) are possible, but time consuming and require us to not be doing other things...so are generally reserved for initial start up conversations or major issues.