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**New investigation exposes cruelty at NY raw milk dairy farms as MAHA symbol gains national prominence**

*"Unpasteurized" investigation reveals suffering behind milk embraced by health secretary Kennedy, soccer star Haaland, and other public figures, while recent outbreak confirms food safety risks*

Albany, NY — Jan. 12, 2026 —On the back of new Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommending three servings of dairy per day, a groundbreaking new investigation by Animal Outlook reveals disturbing cruelty and dangerous conditions at six family-run raw milk dairy farms in upstate New York—from Ulster County up to Jefferson County

The investigation, titled "Unpasteurized: The raw reality of America's family dairy farms," documented severe animal neglect, injuries, and systemic cruelty at the types of farms that are seen by some as humane alternatives to industrial dairy.

Two-thirds of U.S. dairy farms are small and family-run, according to the U.S. Census of Agriculture—the highest such share of any agricultural sector.

Key findings include:

- Medical conditions: Investigators documented cows with open wounds, swollen joints, and infections such as mastitis.
- Extreme confinement: Cows chained so tightly they couldn't turn around or groom themselves.
- Unsanitary conditions: Massive accumulations of feces on animals, walls, and underhoof.
- Industry-standard cruelty: Tail docking, horn burning on calves, castration, electric shock devices, and forced separation of mothers and babies were practiced on family farms, just as they are on industrial-sized farms.
- "Humane washing" in the form of piped-in happy music and sanitized tours portray family farms as a humane alternative to factory farms.

Following analysis of the footage, Animal Outlook sent a letter to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets about the conditions at one of the farms investigated, Country Cousins, in a formal enforcement request. The letter detailed how Country Cousins was milking cows who appeared to have mastitis infections, producing milk with visible chunks and including that same milk for sale to consumers.

The department opened an investigation; however, two weeks after this letter was sent, it was reported that two people had become ill from consuming raw milk linked to Country Cousins, which subsequently tested positive for *Campylobacter* bacteria. Country Cousins was prohibited

from selling any raw milk until subsequent sampling proves their product is free of *Campylobacter*.

While influential figures promote raw milk as pure and natural, our investigator found cows suffering from poor health and living in conditions so unsanitary that within weeks of our investigation, people became ill from drinking raw milk from one of the farms we visited," said Ben Williamson, Executive Director of Animal Outlook. "Consumers seeking ethical alternatives are instead supporting cruelty wrapped in pastoral mythology."

The investigation is particularly timely as interest in raw milk has more than doubled in the last five years, according to a Google Trends analysis. Secretary Kennedy's previous support for raw milk has made it a rallying cry for the "Make America Healthy Again" movement. Meanwhile, soccer star Erling Haaland's promotion of raw milk to his 40 million social media followers has influenced a new generation of consumers.

"Secretary Kennedy speaks about returning to traditional farming, but our investigation shows that tradition includes chaining cows in place for months and milking cows with infections," continued Williamson. "Whether it's a small family farm or a factory farm, dairy production requires mutilating mothers and calves and separating families."

The investigation revealed that the same farms welcoming customers with cheerful tours and happy music hide a darker reality. Animal Outlook's investigator filmed crying calves separated from their mothers, animals covered in their own waste, and on at least one farm, cows with mastitis were still being milked—their infected milk going directly into the product consumers purchase at premium prices.

The same bacteria that raw milk advocates praise as beneficial to health are what food safety experts warn make raw milk dangerous to consume. As the FDA states plainly: "High bacteria counts in raw milk only indicate poor animal health and poor farm hygiene." Consumers concerned about both animal welfare and their own health should choose nutritionally equivalent plant-based milks that don't require animal suffering or expose them to dangerous pathogens.

Animal Outlook has conducted over 50 undercover investigations exposing the reality of animal agriculture. This latest investigation specifically challenges the narrative that small, family-run operations offer a humane alternative to industrial farming.

The full investigation, including undercover footage and a comprehensive description, is available at [animaloutlook.org/unpasteurized](https://animaloutlook.org/unpasteurized).

### **About Animal Outlook**

Animal Outlook is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) animal advocacy organization based in Washington, DC. Our mission is to change the world for animals by exposing the truth and empowering people to make compassionate choices. For more information, visit [animaloutlook.org](https://animaloutlook.org).