



June 14, 2011

To: the Joint Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture
From: MA Farm Bureau Federation
RE: HB 3273 – An Act to exempt the personal use of milk and raw milk products by owners of cows and goats from certain laws governing the use of said products

The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation (MFBB) is the largest farm organization in the Commonwealth representing over 6,000 members and their families. On behalf of our members we would like to express our opposition to HB 3273 – *An Act to exempt the personal use of milk and raw milk products by the owners of cows and goats from certain laws governing the use of said products.*

MFBB supports the concept that owners of cows and goats should be free to drink milk from their own animals without the need for government oversight.

However, this bill would allow milk produced through "cow shares" and "herd shares" to go unregulated. Cow shares and herd shares are, in most instances, where individuals will, *on paper only*, become part owners of an animal or group of animals. In very few instances are these individuals involved in the routine care of these animals, or on-site with the animals. It is, again in most instances, simply a ruse by which to bypass regulations.

The regulations these individuals are seeking to bypass are designed to do two things:

1. Protect public health. Milk can contain many harmful pathogens. It is important that the production of milk is subject to regulatory oversight
2. Protect the market. A single incident of illness from a product can erode consumer confidence in a product. This has been shown time and time again with issues with spinach, eggs, etc.

Passage of this bill would in many instances, put both public health and the market at risk. MFBB cannot support its passage and would encourage the Committee to vote unfavorably on its passage.

We do understand that there is an interest in "micro-dairies" which have only a few animals. Very small operations such as this might have difficulty in meeting existing regulations which designed for much larger operation. We would encourage proponents of this bill to work with the Department of Agricultural Resources to explore whether scale appropriate regulations might be designed to meet capacity needs of micro-dairies and at the same time protect public health and the market.

Contact

Brad Mitchell
MA Farm Bureau Federation
508.481.4766
brad@mfbf.net