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Raw Milk Consumption Behaviour and Assessment of its Risk Factors among Dairy Producers in Urban and Peri-Urban Areas of Debre-Zeit, Ethiopia: Implication for Public Health

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Abstract

A cross-sectional study was conducted from October 2009 to March 2010 in order to assess the risk to public health associated with raw milk consumption. The study investigated raw milk consumption behaviour, factors associated with the consumption of raw milk and milk handling practices among dairy farming communities in urban and peri urban areas of Debre-Zeit. A total of 170 dairy farmers were surveyed. Whether the levels of education, income, urbanisation and awareness of milk borne diseases could be associated with raw milk consumption was tested by statistical analyses. Of the 170 participants, 54 (31.8%) producers had a habit of consuming raw milk. The proportion of dairy farmers consuming raw milk was significantly higher in peri urban areas (94.8%) than in urban areas of Debre-Zeit (13.0%, $\chi^2=89.3$, $df=1$, $OR=124.1$, $p < 0.001$). Of the factors tested, only residing in peri urban areas was significantly associated with consumption of raw milk ($p < 0.001$). All, 29.4% and 19.4% of the farmers included in this study used plastic containers for transporting, milking and storing milk, respectively. The proportion of farmers who stored milk at room temperature (46.5%) was significantly higher than those who stored at refrigeration temperature (24.1%, $\chi^2=13.9$, $df=2$, $p = 0.001$). Storage of milk at room temperature for more than 24 hours for milk fermentation was a common practice among those who did not boil milk for consumption (82.0%, 41/50). The majority of the 170 dairy farmers (85.6%) were unaware of milk borne diseases associated with consumption of raw milk. The study showed that the habit of raw milk consumption, poor milk handling practices and inadequate knowledge of milk borne diseases among dairy producers imply the risk of milk borne diseases in the study area.

Keywords: Consumption habit, Debre-Zeit, milk borne disease, raw milk, risk factors