



What's Up With Spilled Milk?

Q & A, 101 EXTENSION FACT-SHEET

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Q: WHY ARE DAIRY FARMERS DUMPING MILK?

A: Unfortunately, due to shutdowns related to COVID-19, the many outlets for dairy products came to a halt. School milk consumption is the number one market for fluid milk in the United States. So when schools closed, this devastated one important outlet for milk. Even with schools working to provide meals to families, the overall volume consumed is much lower.

A: Restaurants & food services account for 40% of the consumption of dairy, especially in the butter and cheese categories in the United States each year. With restaurants & food services closed to the public and limited to take out, demand for dairy is lower.

Q: WHY ARE THE STORE SHELVES STILL EMPTY?

A: Although there is a plentiful supply of milk being produced in America, the “bottleneck effect” has occurred. This is where more milk has been directed to dairy processing manufactures that sell to retail outlets rather than bulk dairy manufactured products for the food service industry. Due to this “bottleneck effect”, current retail dairy manufactures are at peak capacity and are unable to process more milk.

Q: WHY ARE SOME RETAILERS LIMITING MILK PURCHASES?

A: Limiting milk sales is a judgement that is made on a per retailer basis. Mainly, due to panic buying, many retailers have put limits on milk purchases in order to ensure every consumer has access to milk.

Q: WHY CAN'T MILK PLANTS MAKE OTHER DAIRY PRODUCTS?

A: Most dairy manufacturing/processing plants are built to process specific dairy products with specialized equipment that is very costly. A dairy processing plant that produces specialty to-go butter and coffee creamer used in restaurants cannot easily switch and manufacture fluid milk to be bottled in jugs.

Q: WHY AREN'T FARMERS DONATING THE EXTRA MILK?

A: Before donation, milk must be processed. Food banks do not have the ability to process raw milk and the sell of raw milk in most states is illegal. Many member milk cooperatives are working to donate excess dairy products to local food banks. The United States Department of Agriculture is also beginning a program to buy access dairy products to be donated to charitable organizations.

Q: HOW CAN I HELP?

A: One of the biggest ways you can help is to incorporate more dairy into your diet. Dairy contains 9 essential vitamins and minerals. Dairy is one of the most nutrient dense foods available. Studies have also shown that dairy is beneficial in many other health areas.

A: Ensure that your local school is offering a school meal feeding program and that it contains milk and dairy products.

A: Donate milk or dairy products to your local food bank.

If your school would like to provide additional milk to each child/family or if your county is experiencing milk distribution issues, contact:

North/Central GA: Nicole Duvall
Email: accmclassroom@gmail.com

South GA: Candice Moody Rice
Email: cmrice@atc.cc



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Contact your local county Extension office for more information.

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