

# MARLER CLARK

THE FOOD SAFETY LAW FIRM

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January 1, 2025

Mark McAfee  
Raw Farm, LLC, Chief Executive Offer  
7221 S. Jameson Ave.  
Fresno, CA 93706  
[mark.m@rawfarmusa.com](mailto:mark.m@rawfarmusa.com)

**Re: Mr. Joseph Journell – H5N1 Bird Flu Outbreak Linked to Raw Farm's Raw Milk**

Dear Mr. McAfee,

Our office represents Mr. Joseph Journell in connection with the recent H5N1 bird flu outbreak linked to Raw Farm's raw milk. For years, Mr. Journell regularly consumed your product—approximately three gallons per week—believing in its purported safety and health benefits. That all changed last month, when three of his cats fell ill after consuming your raw milk, which has now been identified as the source of the H5N1 outbreak<sup>1</sup>. Tragically, two of Mr. Journell's cats died, and a third was hospitalized for eight days in critical condition. His fourth cat, who did not consume the raw milk, remained healthy.

Before your recalls of the affected dairy products<sup>2</sup> and the public announcement of the H5N1 outbreak, Mr. Journell contacted you directly to express his concerns about the safety of your raw milk. In response, you provided him with misleading and inaccurate assurances, both via text and over the phone. Specifically, you stated that your milk was entirely safe, that the H5N1 virus could not survive in cold milk for extended periods, and that the deaths of Mr. Journell's cats were unrelated to your product. Additionally, you claimed that the cats on your farm, who consume raw milk, are "thriving," and suggested that Mr. Journell's cats might have contracted the illness from eating a bird. This suggestion was not only inaccurate but also inappropriate, given that all of Mr. Journell's cats are strictly indoor pets.

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<sup>1</sup> Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, December 23, 2024. "Confirmed H5N1 Bird Flu in Santa Barbara County Cats; No Human Cases." Available at: <https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/9d744cd2-57b1-4ffb-aa18-210f7aa9c47e>.

<sup>2</sup> California Department of Public Health, December 3, 2024. "State Secures Broad Voluntary Recall of Raw Milk and Cream to Protect Consumers." Available at: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR24-044.aspx>.

Subsequent testing on Mr. Journell's hospitalized cat, who ultimately survived, confirmed the presence of H5N1<sup>3</sup>. His urine sample tested positive for the virus at two independent laboratories: the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (USDA) and the Animal Health Diagnostic Center at Cornell University.

Furthermore, Mr. Journell still has three bottles of Raw Farm's raw milk, which he had recently fed to his cats. The lot codes on these bottles match those listed in your recall notice<sup>4</sup>. In November and December 2024, Raw Farm issued multiple recalls for all sizes of raw milk and cream produced between November 9–27, 2024, with lot numbers ranging from 20241109 to 20241127. The bottles in Mr. Journell's possession bear the lot codes 20241110 and 20241117, as shown in the attached image.

As a direct result of this incident, Mr. Journell has incurred significant expenses, including tens of thousands of dollars in veterinary bills, wage loss, and other out-of-pocket expenses. We demand that you immediately cease all communication with Mr. Journell and reimburse him for these expenses without delay.

This incident represents yet another outbreak linked to Raw Farm and highlights ongoing concerns regarding the safety of your raw milk products. We trust that you will act swiftly to resolve this matter.

Very truly yours,



Ilana P. Korchia, Esq.

IPK/wdm  
Enclosures

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<sup>3</sup> Test results attached hereto as **Attachment No. 1**.

<sup>4</sup> See Photos of the three Raw Farm raw milk bottles, attached hereto as **Attachment No. 2**.