

BUSINESS & AG

Iowa bill would expand raw milk, cottage food sales and farm-to-table meals



An Iowa House subcommittee advanced language that would expand the sale of raw milk, in addition to creating an annual license for farm-to-table events. (Photo by Cami Koons/ICD)

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iowacapitaldispatch.com

A bill that advanced from a House subcommittee Wednesday would create an event permit for farm-to-table meals, expand the permissible sales of raw milk and allow cottage foods to be sold in grocery stores.

House File 2444 was introduced by Rep. Chad Ingels, R-Randalia, who said it was a way to give “easier access” to farmers who want to hold farm-to-table events and to allow raw milk producers to sell their milk at farm stores.

The bill was opposed by the Iowa Environmental Health Association, a group representing health inspectors in the state. Jefferson Fink, speaking on behalf of the association, said it had “great concern with many issues” in the bill.

The first provision of the bill would create a farm-to-table event license to allow farms to sell meals, featuring farm-raised ingredients, for on-farm consumption. The annual license would cost \$100 and allow for farms to hold “any number” of farm-to-table events.

Fink argued the state already has an event license for home food processors, and that the bill’s language to make this an annual license would mean departments would need to inspect all of the events under the license, the cost of which is not covered by the \$100 annual fee.

“This bill provides workarounds to our already existing food safety regulations,” Fink said. He also argued the bill was “si-

lent on” things like meat slaughtering and processing, restrooms and well water testing.

Rep. Shannon Latham, R-Sheffield, who chaired the subcommittee, said some of those concerns, like slaughtering and butchering, were not part of the intent of the bill, which she said was more about agritourism.

Haley Hook, speaking on behalf of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, said more producers are interested in hosting farm-to-table events as part of the Choose Iowa program and IDALS has been trying to “find a fix” with the Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing for these events. IDALS was registered undecided on the bill.

RAW MILK

The bill also allows for the sale of unpasteurized milk, known as raw milk, and raw milk products at home processing or food establishments, provided they are located at the raw milk farm. Current law provides that raw milk can only be sold directly to customers from the raw milk farm. This would allow raw milk and associated raw milk products to be sold at a store on the farm as well.

Fink said the Iowa Environmental Health Association is generally opposed to any raw milk legislation, including the language in the bill.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hold that consuming raw milk can lead to “serious health risks.” Unpasteurized milk can expose individuals to things like salmonella, brucel-

la, E. coli and listeria. CDC also urges against the consumption of raw milk that is contaminated with the H5N1 avian flu virus as a means of developing antibodies from the virus.

COTTAGE LAWS

The bill also provides that cottage foods can be sold at grocery stores, as long as the food items are properly labeled and separated from noncottage food items.

Cottage foods, or foods that are prepared in a private residence and delivered directly to consumers, are exempt from state licensing, permitting, inspection, packaging and labeling laws under current code.

Sara Throener, speaking on behalf of DIAL, said by allowing the cottage food to be sold in a store instead of directly to a customer, it “no longer is a cottage food.”

Throener said she emailed language to lawmakers to “get around that conflict.”

Latham said Iowa stores can purchase “whole processed goods” from other states and sell it, but cannot purchase these locally produced cottage foods to sell, which is what the bill intended to fix.

Latham said she would sign off on the bill, but that it would need an amendment before it reached the floor.

Rep. Elinor Levin, D-Iowa City, said she couldn’t sign off on the bill as is, but said she looked forward to seeing the amendment.

“I’m hugely supportive of anything that opens up new markets and allows our farmers to safely provide their on-farm experiences,” Levin said.

EXTENSION OUTREACH

4-H swine tagging and ear notching

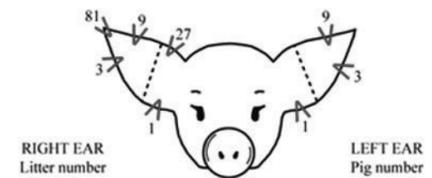


KATE TEWES
4-H LIVESTOCK COORDINATOR

I come to you this week with some swine information! We will tag pigs with 4-H tags on May 30, but those pigs are being born or will soon be born to make that time frame. As those pigs are born it is important to remember that Clay County and Iowa 4-H requires that those pigs being exhibited are ear notched.

This is certainly a topic that is easier to explain with a picture, but we shall try to explain it with words. Ear notches use both ears with the right ear being the litter number and the left ear being the individual pig’s number. The numbers together identify that pig. The right ear (litter number) has five locations. Each location has a number assigned to it and can have two notches. The numbers are one, three, nine, 27 and 81. A notch on a one and a three would be read as a four. This would be the fourth litter that sow has had in her life. Next is the pig’s left ear. There are three numbers on this one: one, three and nine. If the sow had 10 piglets that 10th one would have two notches, one in the one position and one in the nine position. To tie it together, the sow had 10 pigs in her fourth litter, those piglets’ numbers would read 4-1 through 4-10. The litter is read first with the individual number second.

Nebraska Extension has an excellent publication with good pictures on how to read ear



RIGHT EAR
Litter number

LEFT EAR
Pig number

notches. I have included one picture. That article is found at <https://extensionpubs.unl.edu/publication/g1880/na/html/view>.

The article explains how to make the notches. I encourage all of our 4-H Swine Project members to check out the article. If anyone needs help or has questions on notching their pigs please give us a call. We have some good resources in the office as well as an experienced swine committee to help our 4-Hers learn. Whether you raise your own or purchase your pigs it is good to be able to read notches and be able to identify individual pigs.

LEGAL

Spencer Municipal Utilities February 12, 2026, at 7:00 A.M. The Board of Trustees of the Spencer Municipal Utilities met on February 12, 2026, at 7:00 A.M., Davis, Irvine, McCaulley, Nelson and Tostenrud were present. The Board approved by motion: 1) Resolution approving construction contract and bond for Lead Service Line Replacement Project. 2) Approve Minutes from January 2 8:00 AM, January 2 3:00 PM and January 15, 2026 meetings. 3) Approve the bills – listing attached. 4) Approve water meter purchase at a cost of \$71,652. 5) Approve transformer purchase at a cost of \$147,536. 6) Approve electric materials purchase up to \$253,055. 7) Approve vehicle purchase at a cost of \$46,950. 8) Approve 2026 avoided cost. 9) Approve Watts Electric Company change order #1. 10) Approve SEL and InSource Solutions quotes for SCADA upgrades at a cost of \$197,114. 11) Meeting adjourned.	2/6/2026 MOTION INDUSTRIES...\$4,529.48 2/6/2026 QWEST DBA CENTRUYLINK-IA...\$190.30 2/6/2026 RESCO INC...\$23,447.72 2/6/2026 STATE STEEL OF SPENCER...\$1,027.72 2/6/2026 UPPER DES MOINES OPPORTUNITY...\$276.40 2/6/2026 316 GRAND HOLDINGS...\$150.48 2/6/2026 CHARLES ANDERSON...\$40.84 2/6/2026 THOMAS J BONESCHANS...\$133.57 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