



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 5, 2011

Armed Raid on Raw-Milk Seller Leads to Three Arrests

“3 arrested on raw-milk charges” read the headline. One could be forgiven for assuming the news source was the Soviet-era Pravda or the mouthpiece for some other tyrannical regime. What other kind of government would arrest people over moo juice? In fact, however, that headline appeared in the Los Angeles Times, which was reporting on a raid on a southern California business.



On August 3 three individuals were arrested in what NaturalNews.com is [calling](#) a “SWAT-style armed raid” carried out by “helmet-wearing, gun-carrying enforcement agents from the LA County Sheriff’s Office, the FDA, the Dept. of Agriculture and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control).” James Stewart, proprietor of Rawesome Foods in Venice; Sharon Palmer, operator of Healthy Family Farms in Santa Paula; and Eugenie Bloch, employee of Healthy Family Farms, were charged with the heinous crime of selling unpasteurized (raw) milk without ponying up the cash for a government-issued license.

According to the *Times*, “The arrests followed a one-year investigation during which undercover agents purchased unpasteurized dairy products from Healthy Family Farms stands in Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, said Matthew Krasnowski, a district attorney spokesman. The products included unpasteurized goat milk, cheese and yogurt.”

Rawesome Foods, which sells raw dairy products and other farm products exclusively to paid members who know precisely what they are buying, and Healthy Family Farms, which describes itself as “a sustainable, pasture-based farming operation,” were raided by government agents in June 2010 on similar grounds. Both reopened soon afterward.

While some products were seized on previous raids, this one went much further. NaturalNews reports that Stewart “was followed from his private residence by law enforcement, and when he entered his store, the raid was launched.”

Law enforcement demanded that all customers (members) of the store vacate the premises, then they demanded to know how much cash James had at the store. When James explained the amount of cash he had at the store — which is used to purchase product for selling there — agents demanded to know why he had such an amount of cash and where it came from.



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James was handcuffed, was *never* read his rights and was stuffed into an *unmarked* car. ...

Law enforcement then proceeded to *destroy* the inventory of the store [sic] by pouring the milk down the drain and/or confiscating raw cheese and fresh produce for destruction. [All emphasis in original.]

NaturalNews later published the [search warrant](#) for Rawesome Foods, which states that “various samples of any food products may be taken for laboratory analysis.” Yet the government agents, says the website, “stole or destroyed the ENTIRE INVENTORY of Rawesome Foods” and “made off with over \$4,500 in cash belonging to ... Stewart.”

Even more chillingly, the warrant actually authorized agents to confiscate computer files, video camera files, membership agreements, tax records, computers and electronic devices, customer information, and practically everything else in the store. As NaturalNews points out, by seizing these items the government will be able to concoct federal charges against Rawesome and intimidate or even charge its members.

Stewart was initially held with bail set at \$123,000 “with no possibility of using bail bond,” according to NaturalNews. “Law enforcement has demanded that if he comes up with the money to cover bail, he must disclose to them all the sources of that money. (This is an illegal demand!)”

Fortunately, fans of food freedom didn’t take this lying down. They organized a [protest](#) outside the Los Angeles County Courthouse, where Stewart and Bloch were to be arraigned on Thursday. One protestor reported that Bloch had been released and Stewart’s bail had been reduced to \$30,000 on the condition that he not sell raw dairy products without a license.

Why, one may ask, is the government so intent on shutting down raw milk producers and sellers? The stated reason is always that raw milk may contain harmful bacteria, which is true but irrelevant. As Congressman (and medical doctor) [Ron Paul put it](#), “If we are not even free anymore to decide something as basic as what we wish to eat or drink, how much freedom do we really have left?”

Besides, from a constitutional standpoint, it’s certainly none of the federal government’s business. If anyone should be policing what Healthy Family Farms produces and Rawesome Foods sells, it’s the state of California and the local jurisdictions in which those businesses reside — and their law enforcement agencies, without the encouragement of the feds, would probably not waste their time and taxpayers’ money on such trivial things.

There are two far more plausible reasons for the war on raw milk, neither of which has anything to do with our rulers’ supposed concern for our health. First, as the *Times* astutely observes, “demand for all manner of raw foods has been growing” — a threat to “the politically powerful dairy industry,” which “has pressed the government to act.” Second, it’s about asserting power over individuals. The [San Jose Mercury News](#) writes that one of the allegedly incriminating pieces of evidence turned up in the raid on Rawesome was a membership agreement stating that the prospective member will “completely reject and refuse all governmental standards ... any governmental sanitation standards for food storage and display.” As Joanne Whittle, a Rawesome volunteer remarked, “I guess that’s their bone of contention, that they can’t control us.”

Friends of freedom hope that Stewart, Palmer, and Bloch are completely cleared and get back into business as soon as possible — and that others fearlessly follow in their footsteps. The more people the government can’t control, the better the prospects for individual liberty.



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