

## Horse Milk Ice Cream Is Now A Thing – Here’s Why It Can Never Be Ethical

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*Polish scientists have run tests to discover whether milk from horses would be good for making ice cream. They found that the ice cream had the right kind of texture and appearance, as well as being half as fatty as cow's milk ice cream. The experiment was motivated by the “growing interest” in using mare’s milk to make food... The last thing horses need is yet another way for humans to take advantage of them, to their detriment. The media could do its small bit by not promoting new forms of animal agriculture.*



Horse milk is becoming more popular - Media Credit: Adobe Stock

Polish scientists have run tests to [discover whether milk from horses](#) would be good for making ice cream. They found that the ice cream had the right kind of texture and appearance, as well as being half as fatty as cow’s milk ice cream. The experiment was motivated by the “growing interest” in using mare’s milk to make food.

In response to this study, journalists from several newspapers have gone out to determine whether horse’s milk ice cream tastes any good. They visited the UK’s only horse milk farmer, Frank Shellard, to obtain some milk. They then either turned it into ice cream themselves or asked an ice cream company to do it. Journalists have discussed the potential ick factor people might feel about it. They have also explored the milk’s purported health benefits — Shellard claims [a glass a day has cut his cholesterol by half](#).

But not one article has stopped to ask whether we should even be looking for new animals to bring into the dairy farming industry.

### The wrong kind of diversity

Why would anyone need to drink mare’s milk? The Polish study explains that people are becoming more health-conscious and are looking for foods with high nutritional content. Horse’s milk could fill that role, the study suggests. But why look for yet another animal to exploit for this purpose when we could be using plant foods we already have? Fortified soy milk, for example, is considered to be a healthy alternative to dairy. It’s comparable to cow’s milk for protein content while being low in saturated fat and containing no cholesterol.

Several companies are also developing new alternatives using plant-based ingredients. One New Zealand company is working on “[functional](#)” [legume-based dairy alternatives](#) that could replace dairy in food manufacturing. Another based in Sweden is [using fermentation to make cheese from legumes](#) that is similar to dairy cheese in texture.



*Adobe Stock We should not be promoting new forms of animal agriculture*

Instead of diversifying animal agriculture, we could also be diversifying the kinds of crops we grow and deploying technologies such as [precision fermentation](#) to create new foods and boost nutritional value. We have [lost around three-quarters of crop diversity](#) in the past 100 years. We get 90 percent of our calories from 30 plant species. Rice, maize, and wheat make up half of that. This threatens our health as well as our food security.

Several of the media stories on the Polish study begin with acknowledging that the thought of drinking horse’s milk might gross people out. (And why wouldn’t you be grossed out? It’s meant for foals, just as cow’s milk is meant for calves). But it seems pointless to try to convince people to accept horse milk, same as [trying to persuade them to eat insect](#) burgers instead of meat. If we want to convince them to eat healthier, more environmental alternatives, plant-based foods are the best option. But lately sections of the media have chosen to help stoke panic about “[ultra-processed](#)” [vegan products](#) instead.

### **Turning horses into dairy cows**

At the moment, Shellard’s horse dairy is small-scale, supplying fewer than 100 regular customers. But what if horse’s milk did become popular?

In order to meet demand for cow’s milk, the dairy industry has become increasingly intensive and mechanized. Dairy cows have been bred to produce around [double the milk they did 40 years ago](#). Incidences of mastitis, a painful inflammatory disease of the udders, is common. So is [lameness](#), partly due to poor hoof care and being forced to stand on hard floors for long periods. The cows give birth to a calf a year in order to keep them producing milk, and have to suffer having their calves taken away shortly after they’re born. Though they could live for 20 years naturally, dairy cows are slaughtered at five years old, once they stop being so productive.

Do we really want to see horses end up enduring the same life? There has been widespread condemnation of [plans to start farming octopuses for food](#), with many media stories questioning its ethical and environmental implications. The same perspective needs to be applied to horses, or any species at risk of being turned into the next farmed animal.

### Horses already exploited



*RD-Fotografie – stock.adobe.com Horses are already exploited for entertainment*

Farming horses for their milk would only add to the ways in which these [intelligent](#), [sensitive](#) animals are already exploited for commercial gain.

People eat [horse meat](#) in countries including France, Mexico, and Japan. They are either raised specifically for meat, or sent to slaughter after being retired from racing or pulling carriages. In parts of the world including South America and Iceland, there is such a thing as [horse “blood farms.”](#) Large quantities of blood is taken from pregnant mares to extract Pregnant Mare Serum Gonadotropin (PMSG), a hormone commonly used within [industrial pig breeding](#). Investigations have revealed serious abuse of the horses on these farms, where the horses are restrained and have large cannulas inserted into their jugular veins.

Horses used for entertainment also suffer abuse and can die from injuries as a result of being pushed too hard. [Dozens of horses die on racecourses in the UK each year](#), and it isn’t clear what happens to many of them once they retire from racing. Training methods used in horse “sports” are also questionable. Recently, a famous [dressage rider was banned from the Paris Olympics](#) after footage emerged of her repeatedly whipping a horse during a training session. Other horses in [Olympic events have been abused](#) too, or suffered serious injuries.

The last thing horses need is yet another way for humans to take advantage of them, to their detriment. The media could do its small bit by not promoting new forms of animal agriculture.