

# Update on melamine in foods from China

Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

Last updated 1 October 2008

Australian food safety agencies continue to actively investigate and respond to melamine contamination of some products containing dairy ingredients made in China and elsewhere.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is coordinating action among Federal, State and Territory food agencies. This includes:

- \* working with importers and food manufacturers in Australia to ascertain if products contain Chinese dairy product as an ingredient possibly contaminated with melamine
- \* targeted precautionary testing of product on Australian shelves
- \* monitoring of imports by AQIS, and
- \* working closely with food regulators around the world including the World Health Organisation.

## **What products are affected?**

To 1 October 2008, only White Rabbit milk-based sweets have shown positive test results in Australia.

Food safety agencies are closely monitoring new information on the issue and potentially suspect foods as it becomes available. The latest information includes:

### White Rabbit sweets withdrawn

White Rabbit milk-based sweets have been withdrawn from sale in Australia by importers and wholesalers. The action commenced on 24 September 2008 and follows Australian test results showing levels of melamine in product available here. It also follows overseas tests showing contamination.

The sweets were sold in retail packs through Asian retailers and supermarkets and also available in some Asian restaurants.

Consumers are advised not to consume White Rabbit milk-based sweets made in China. Consumers should dispose of the product safely out of the reach of children and pets.

### Cadbury Eclairs withdrawn

As a precaution, Cadbury's has withdrawn the 180g (blue) packs of its Cadbury-branded Eclairs sweets made in China. It has also withdrawn several other products overseas which are not available in Australia. The action commenced on 30 September 2008 and is pending Australian test results for possible melamine contamination.

Cadbury Eclairs were available widely in retail outlets.

As a precaution, consumers are currently advised not to eat Cadbury Eclairs in 180g (blue) packs.

### Lotte Koala Biscuits withdrawn

Australian importers of Lotte Koala Biscuits have also undertaken a precautionary withdrawal. This follows overseas reports of contaminated ingredients.

The product was available widely at supermarkets. Consumers are advised to not consume the product. Consumers should dispose of the product safely out of the reach of children and pets.

## **Many products cleared**

Authorities are testing a targeted range of other products from China containing dairy as a minor ingredient. More than 50 products have been tested so far.

Test results to date have not detected the presence of melamine in any of these products, except for White Rabbit sweets.

As well, some industry associations are alerting regulatory bodies to information from their members on the sources of ingredients they use.

The Confectionery Manufacturers of Australasia has published a list of products and manufacturers which have stated their products do not use Chinese dairy ingredients contaminated with melamine:

See the confectionery list at

<http://www.candy.net.au/consumer-information.asp?pgID=644>

Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS) has confirmed that Australia has not imported milk products containing dairy as a major ingredient (more than 10%) from China this year. These products containing more than 10% dairy ingredients must have an import permit (with a few minor exceptions) before they can enter Australia.

### **Suspect infant formula not available here**

Infant formula products in Australia are produced under strict standards to ensure their safety and nutritional value and can be used normally.

Australia does not import infant formula products from China due to quarantine restrictions. This has been confirmed by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS).

Food regulators have conducted targeted inspections at wholesale and retail level and have found none of the Chinese infant formula product on shelves.

Consumers who may have travelled to China and purchased formula or other dairy products when travelling for personal use should not consume those products. See the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advice <http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/Contaminated> dairy\_products

### **Foods containing small amounts of dairy are less a concern**

It is unlikely that there would be a problem if melamine is consumed in small amounts either from foods with dairy as a minor ingredient and/or where the food is consumed now and then in small amounts.

If consumed in higher quantities over a long period melamine may, in some individuals, cause health problems such as kidney stones or kidney disease.

Infants in China were particularly affected as they were consuming significant amounts of contaminated milk formula on a daily basis.

Symptoms of kidney problems include blood in urine, little or no urine, signs of kidney infection, pain and high blood pressure.

\* Advice to General Practitioners

<http://www.racgp.org.au/fridayfax/27434>

\* WHO guide on Melamine: see

[http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs\\_management/infosan\\_events/en/index3.htm](http://www.who.int/foodsafety/fs_management/infosan_events/en/index3.htm)

|

People with specific concerns should see their medical doctor.

### **What is melamine**

Melamine is used in the plastics industry and should not be used in food. There may be tiny levels of melamine in foods due to leaching from packaging materials, but these levels are not a health concern.

Melamine has allegedly been used in China to make milk appear higher in protein than it really is.

Chinese health officials have advised that melamine has been found recently in baby formula and in other Chinese dairy products.

The contaminated milk powder may be linked to kidney problems found in Chinese infants and a number of infant deaths.