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Australian Dairy Industry food safety and quality assurance statement on COVID-19

The Australian Dairy Products Federation (ADPF) and Dairy Australia, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) have prepared the following food safety and quality assurance statement on behalf of its members, to advise on the safe and effective production of Australian dairy products. This generic statement is constrained to the site of dairy manufacturing – freight and handling practices of dairy products once they leave the manufactures own, or externally approved, distribution site, need to be considered over and above and beyond our area of control.

Food Safety Assurance, and COVID 19.

All Australian dairy farms, milk transport operators, manufacturing establishments and dairy food storage facilities must comply with the mandatory Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) Food Standards Code (FSC). The FSC requires all such entities to develop a Food Safety Plan which is audited by State regulatory authorities to maintain their licence to operate, and by the Department of Agriculture Water and Environment (DAWE) as part of their assessment when granting export approvals.

The Food Safety Plan must provide detailed evidence of procedures for the control of all microbiological risks to dairy products and includes evidence for ensuring staff are appropriately trained in enacting these procedures. An important element of this food safety control is that all milk is pasteurised in the process of dairy product manufacturing. Pasteurisation is effective in killing any pathogens which may be present in raw milk.

In responding to the increased concerns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, individual companies have consulted the advice of the World Health Organisation on COVID-19 and food safety, as well as the guidance of Work Safe Australia, the Department of Health and Dairy Australia in developing their own COVID-19 protocols. These provide additional controls to those in their approved Food Safety Plan, which aim to manage the risks associated with COVID-19 and containing the spread of the virus.

Companies have introduced a number of actions, appropriate to their own environment, as no two factories are the same. Thereby, specific quality assurance statements on COVID-19 and food safety will need to come from individual companies.

We can confidently say that dairy companies have deployed strict COVID-19 food safety and quality risk assessment protocols to ensure the health and safety of employees; maintaining operations so that safe, essential food production can continue; and, being socially responsible in line with company values.

The specific additional actions now being employed at Australian dairy establishments include:

- Education and training, e.g., staff training and communication; external communication
- Cleaning and disinfection, e.g., frequency, objects and surfaces,
- Personal protective equipment, e.g. disposable gloves, face masks
- Hygiene in the workplace, e.g. hand washing, sanitisation/disinfectants, tissues, hand towels, soap
- Temperature checking of all personnel and policies and actions for detection outside of the normal range
- Social/ physical distancing measures, e.g., essential staff and contractors on site; non-essential staff working from home; meetings; visitors; shared facilities; travel
- Policies and procedures for a suspected or diagnosed case of COVID-19, e.g. education and training about early signs and symptoms; screening checklists; isolation; tracebacks and stand down provisions.

These protocols are carefully monitored and updated to reflect the latest evidence and advice.

A range of dairy processor-specific guidance materials and resources are also available on the [Dairy Australia website](#) to support and complement companies specific protocols on COVID-19 and food safety.

As companies already adhere to the mandatory food safety regulations, and in addition have adopted specific protocols on COVID-19, it is deemed unnecessary for testing of products or packaging, for the presence of nucleic acid, to be undertaken.

We look forward to the ongoing safe supply of dairy products.

Yours sincerely,

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