

DAIRYSAFE has an obligation to actively promote food safety learnings that are important to your business.

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A foodborne illness outbreak can have a devastating effect on a business producing dairy products. Have you seen these headlines?

**E.coli death linked cheesemaker lays off staff** - Errington Cheese, the Scottish cheesemaker linked to a fatal outbreak of E.coli O157 in 2016, has made the last of its remaining staff redundant, as sales dropped in spite of a ruling that cleared the company of breaching hygiene regulations. (22-Aug-2018 By James Ridler)

E.coli is not the only foodborne pathogen you need to manage. Listeria is also a critical hazard in dairy production and can have catastrophic consequences on your business and human health.

**One death linked to Listeria from soft cheese** - Two people have been hospitalised and one has died in an ongoing outbreak of Listeria monocytogenes linked to Latin-style soft cheese. (19-Jan-2015 By Joseph James Whitworth)

What does this mean for you and your business?

The first round of Dairysafe audits in 2018 identified a significant trend among dairy processors not adequately monitoring key pathogenic hazards associated with dairy processing. This represents a significant business risk, and also a legal breach of a dairy processor's accreditation.

Microbiological testing is critical to ensure safety of process and product, and safeguards business continuity should a food safety incident occur.



**Does your process and post production handling adequately protect your product?**

Microbiological monitoring and testing proves your food safety program is effective. The controls and interventions applied in your business and along the supply chain are designed to reduce the likelihood of a dairy product containing pathogens and presenting a risk to consumers. Ongoing testing identifies production and food safety issues and allows you to put corrections in place prior to negative marketplace impacts.

Regular monitoring focuses on potential contamination of dairy products by pathogens such as *E.coli*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, Coagulase-positive staphylococci, Salmonella and *Bacillus cereus*. Testing is required every 10-20 batches, depending on the properties of the product being produced, including pH, moisture content and post pasteurisation.

Environmental monitoring for other bacteria that are indicators of process hygiene, such as Listeria, Coliforms, Staph and SPC, is also important to show the effectiveness of 'Good Manufacturing Processes', and manage the risk of post processing contamination.

And finally, businesses producing products such as milk powders provided to vulnerable populations (such as low birth weight babies and the elderly) should be regularly testing for *Cronobacter sakazakii*, an environmental contaminant. This bacterium can cause a rare but often fatal infection of the bloodstream and central nervous system. Infants with weakened immune systems, particularly premature infants, are most likely to contract an *Cronobacter* infection, although the bacteria have caused illnesses in all age groups.

The minimum testing requirements for your dairy business are found on the Dairysafe website: **Microbiological testing criteria**. These requirements are applied by all Australian dairy food safety regulators.

Contamination picked up at point of sale, or an illness associated with your product, can result in anxiety and costly action. The potential impacts to your business can be catastrophic - the worst-case scenarios are highlighted in the headlines at the top of this Bulletin.

A comprehensive product testing schedule is essential for all product categories you produce. Testing at the required frequency is crucial to verifying the effectiveness of your food safety program and ensuring the continuity of your business.

The effectiveness and status of your food safety arrangements is critical to you and your business.

Therefore, questions for you to consider are:

- Is your microbiological monitoring and testing program sufficient and compliant?**
- Can your brand withstand a food safety crisis?**
- Have you considered a food safety incident in your business continuity planning?**
- Have you recently tested your recall plan?**

