

Fresh contamination scare for New Zealand dairy giant

January 13 2014

New Zealand dairy giant Fonterra faced a new contamination scare Tuesday with the forced recall of nearly 9,000 bottles of cream which had been tainted with E.coli bacteria.

The fresh cream had been produced for domestic consumption in the North Island.

Fonterra Brands New Zealand Managing Director Peter McClure said he did not want to speculate on how the contamination occurred.

But he told Radio New Zealand it was unlikely to have come in with the milk from the farms, and it was "almost impossible" the contamination could have been deliberate.

It was the first time in 18 years a Fonterra product had tested positive for E.coli, which is found in human and animal faeces and can cause infections and symptoms similar to food poisoning.

"We wouldn't want this at any time and certainly now is not a good time for us either, but we're doing everything we can," McClure said.

The E.Coli contamination follows a botulism scare last year which forced a global recall of Fonterra infant formula products.

That scare turned out to be a false alarm, but French dairy giant Danone announced last week it was suing Fonterra for compensation.

The company, which has since cancelled its supply contract with Fonterra, had estimated the crisis had cost it 300 million euros (\$407 million).

In 2008, six children died and another 300,000 fell ill in China after a local company part-owned by Fonterra illegally laced milk with the chemical melamine.

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