

**New Zealand Milk Board,
1978**

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Wellington, New Zealand
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HISTORICAL

31 July 1978.

The New Zealand Milk in Schools Scheme was inaugurated by the Government in 1936. Its object was "to make available to every child attending public and private primary schools and kindergartens, and, where desired, every child attending post-primary schools", a free half pint (284 ml) of milk on each of the five school days per week.

The first distribution of such milk was effected on 1 March 1937 when children in the four main cities of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin were supplied with pasteurised milk in a half pint (284 ml) glass bottle with an inset cardboard cap containing a push-in hole for inserting a drinking straw.

Prior to the Government scheme, schemes had been organised on a local basis in various parts of the country during the depression years, 1929 to 1934.

It is popularly believed that the introduction of the Milk in Schools Scheme, at the end of the then world-wide depression, was to alleviate malnutrition amongst schoolchildren. Research undertaken at that time failed to find any widespread nutritional deficiencies in children.

The scheme was initially introduced to provide children with an essential minimum quota of milk which they may not have received at home. This arose not so much from financial inability to purchase milk and other protein foods, but rather from a widespread lack of knowledge of the correct foods needed by children and of dietary needs generally.

Doctors and dietitians tell us that children need between 600 and 900 ml of milk daily to supply calcium and other elements essential to growing bodies. The Milk in Schools Scheme was designed to supply children with at least one-quarter of that daily requirement.

The scheme began in 1937, under the auspices of the then Department of Health. In 1951 the administration of Milk in Schools was transferred to the Internal Marketing Department of the then Department of Agriculture and from 1953 to 1967 came under the control of the New Zealand Milk Board.

ADMINISTRATION

The milk for the scheme was supplied to schools from milk stations situated close to centres of population and it could only be supplied to those schools where the cost of distribution from the milk stations was not prohibitively high.

In scattered and isolated areas where the supply of bottled pasteurised milk was not practicable, a free issue of raw (unpasteurised) milk was made available locally for making cocoa, or free issues of malted milk powder were provided.

Approval was required from the Department of Health before schools could participate in either of these alternatives to ensure that the facilities for preparing these milk drinks were adequate.

The scheme as mentioned before was available to all types of educational institutions and was entirely voluntary. For ease of administration some schools insisted that all pupils took the milk unless advised to the contrary by parents. It was usual for the older children to be encouraged to make up their own minds whether to partake of the milk or not.

In general terms the percentage of primary schoolchildren taking milk compared with total roll numbers in the schools was calculated at approximately 68 percent and at approximately 38 percent in secondary schools. Again in general terms it appeared that the younger the age group the higher the percentage of children taking milk and this is further emphasised by the fact that many kindergartens and play centres opted to purchase milk for children following the demise of the free Milk in Schools Scheme.

The New Zealand Milk Board arranges milk production contracts with cooperative milk producer associations each year, and for this purpose both town and school milk were covered by the same contract. The producer company sold to the appropriate milk treatment organisation the milk required for both town and school milk at the current price prevailing for town milk. The treatment organisation pasteurised and bottled the milk, and in many cases undertook the delivery to the schools as well. In other cases separate cartage contractors were employed. The New Zealand Milk Board paid the treatment station a price which covered the producer price paid out, inwards collection from the farms to the treatment station, pasteurisation and bottling at a standard price, and varying rates for delivery to the schools, depending upon the actual costs in the area, as well as the cost of drinking straws.

The Board usually made the detailed arrangements for delivery, even where subcontractors were involved. In many cases this delivery was done in connection with some other milk activity, such as the distribution of town milk to smaller centres, backloading on farm collection vehicles, etc. This integration of the handling arrangements for both town milk and school milk supply was one of the reasons why the administration for the scheme was handled by the New Zealand Milk Board.

To restrict the supply of milk to those schools where the costs of delivery were reasonable, the Board, pursuant to a decision by Government met the costs of distribution up to a certain point. Costs in excess of the set per gallon figure imposed by Government, had to be borne by the school.

Payments by the Board to the milk treatment stations out of Government subsidy for milk supplied were made on the basis of load sheets outlining quantities of milk delivered. These were cross-checked by the schools submitting a return of such quantities received, once a month.

This, and the placing of the order for milk, and the varying of orders when necessary was the only administration work schools had to do, apart from the distribution of the milk to the children.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

No real problems were encountered in the supply of good quality milk for schools.

The Government guaranteed to purchase from the milk producer associations only three-quarters of the estimated amount of milk required for the schools. This was because such milk was paid for on a 365 day per year basis, and school consumption of milk was based on 200 days per year. The Government in fact relied on there always being sufficient production available to meet the other quarter of the demand. This did occur throughout most of the year, and the arrangement reduced the Government's liability in disposing of the contracted quantity on the days it was not supplied to the schools.

No difficulties were experienced in bringing the milk from the farms and arranging for it to be pasteurised and bottled in treatment stations. The allowances given to the treatment stations for treating and bottling the school milk was higher than that paid for handling town milk. This was because school milk was provided in a half pint bottle (284 ml) resulting in a higher per litre cost than for town milk which was then distributed in pint bottles (568 ml).

