

Milk minus mutants boost for the lactose intolerant

- Graeme Hammond
- From: *Sunday Herald Sun*
- July 16, 2011 11:21PM



Dairy farmer Peter Mulcahy and his daughter Alexandra, 15, on his property near Tongala.
Picture: Ian Currie *Source: Herald Sun*

THIRD-generation dairy farmer Peter Mulcahy accepted it as a cruel twist of fate that three of his five daughters suffered adverse reactions to milk.

For the youngest, Alexandra, 15, the problem was severe. Just a sip of milk or a lick of ice cream was enough to prompt a rash, major digestive problems and usually vomiting within 10 minutes.

The family's doctor advised that she suffered lactose intolerance and warned her against drinking milk again.

But a chance encounter between Mr Mulcahy and another farmer at a Queensland cattle sale proved the doctor wrong.

It was there that he heard of A2 milk, produced by cows carefully bred to produce milk free of a rogue protein suspected of causing most problems in dairy-intolerant people.

The discovery not only changed Alexandra's life, but also paved the way for Mr Mulcahy and his brothers to become some of the biggest producers of A2 milk in Australia.

A2 milk is one of Australia's fastest-growing grocery lines, with news of its health benefits spreading by word of mouth.

"Alexandra was seven and hadn't been able to drink milk for years," Mr Mulcahy, from Tongala, said. "This bloke told me I should give A2 a try. He said plenty of other people who'd never been able to drink milk were now able to drink as much as they wanted.

"I gave her an eggcup full of A2 and I waited for the usual reaction, but there was none. The next day she had a whole glass. My wife was sceptical, but after a week she was starting to be convinced."

He said any contact with conventional milk - in cheese on a pizza, or ice cream - still made Alexandra sick, but she had never had a problem with A2.

Peter Nathan, chief executive of A2 Milk, said scientists had identified a rogue protein as the problem. The protein, known as BCM7, is believed to have emerged as a mutation in European dairy cows hundreds of years ago.

It is so widespread that now only a third of most dairy herds are free of it.

(END)