

Nestlé and Bear Brand sweetened beverage creamer

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In September 2008, a study published in the British Medical Journal claimed that Nestlé's Bear Brand sweetened beverage creamer logo – an adult bear holding a cub in its lap - caused parents in Laos to believe that the product was an appropriate substitute for breast milk.

Nestlé is very concerned about feeding inappropriate foods of all sorts to infants, a far too frequent practice and a serious public health concern that needs attention. Feeding inappropriate foods to infants and young children leads to nutritional deficiencies and ill health of young children.

Bear Brand coffee creamer is a dairy product similar to sweetened condensed milk. In order to prevent inappropriate use of it for feeding infants, the information "*not to be used as a breast milk substitute*" was included on the label in English, Lao and Thai languages. In addition, a pictogram of an infant bottle with a large red X across it had been printed on the label to alert consumers who may be illiterate.

Nevertheless, in case there could be any confusion in the minds of caregivers, we decided to alter the logo to a bear holding a glass of milk instead of a bear with a cub. This logo was chosen because a child is able to hold a glass without help at 18 months of age, thus visually differentiating the product from one that would be appropriate for use with an infant.

To ensure that the new logo effectively eliminated any possible confusion, we commissioned a consumer research in rural areas of Laos and Thailand to test it against other sweetened condensed milk logos. The research showed that in Laos, contrary to Thailand, there is a widespread cultural perception that sweetened condensed milk can be consumed by infants and that this perception comes primarily from traditional practices, passed by word of mouth, through families, as well as from the product's milk content and perceived benefits and properties. We found no indication that this perception was linked to the Bear Brand logo; other brands with different logos were equally likely to be chosen for feeding infants.

The production of Bear Brand sweetened beverage creamer was discontinued in 2011 for business reasons.