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Innovative Tool Helps Meat Processor Safely Reduce Sanitizer by 35%

As a meat processor in business since 1958, Ray's Wholesale Meat of Yakima, WA has always looked for new technologies to help keep its quality up while keeping costs down. "It's a tough business to make it in, and the key is to 'keep your pencil sharp,'" says Mike Wakefield, HACCP Manager for Ray's Wholesale Meats. "We're always looking for a better way to do things that will allow us to stay competitive and keep our customers happy."

This became especially important after the U.S. Department of Agriculture put new emphasis on testing for Listeria. Wakefield's team knew it needed to find an easy, effective and low-cost way to verify their plant sanitation program.

Ray's decided to invest in the LIGHTNING MVP from BioControl Systems, Inc., a worldwide leader in food safety testing based in Bellevue, WA (www.biocontrols.com). The LIGHTNING MVP is a single instrument that measures, records and analyzes results validating both HACCP and hygiene programs.

"We looked at all our options and the LIGHTNING MVP was the easiest to use, from the instrument to the swabs," Wakefield says. The tool supports testing of ATP, validates the sanitation program, and has HACCP parameters such as pH, temperature and sanitizer concentration. "We've found the LIGHTNING MVP to be a great tool. It's a nice feeling to have our environmental tests go out and have the confidence that they'll come back negative since we know we've cleaned so thoroughly and effectively. It's one thing for a surface to look clean, but when I use the LIGHTNING MVP, I know it's clean."

More Accurate Sanitizer Measurement Makes a Difference

Recently, BioControl released the LIGHTNING MVP Conductivity Probe, which measures both conductivity and concentration of sanitizers and cleansers. When measuring solution strength with the LIGHTNING MVP a definitive numeric result is obtained and stored rather than a range, as is typical of test strips and titration kits.

"We knew this would be a useful tool for customers monitoring HACCP and hygiene parameters," says Anita Kressner, Director of Sales and Marketing for BioControl Systems, Inc. "Sanitizers and cleansers are a significant budget item. By measuring those chemicals precisely, customers can tightly control their use and ensure their budget dollars are not going down the drain. Even in a medium-sized plant, a 5% overuse on sanitizers can amount to tens of thousands of dollars per year of unnecessary expense."

Wakefield brought in the MVP Conductivity Probe to use with their LIGHTNING MVP and found success with it immediately. "I knew a more accurate measurement of our sanitizers would be useful, but I had no idea it would prove its value so quickly. I estimate that I'm using 35% fewer sanitizers than before I started using the MVP Conductivity Probe. Overusing sanitizers by that much runs into big expense. I'm very pleased with the results already."

"These savings come through the increased control I have with the [MVP Conductivity] probe over either test strips or titration kits," continues Wakefield. "Matching a test strip to a color patch associated with 100, 200, or 400 parts-per-million (ppm) is so subjective, especially from employee to employee. Even titration kits show serious variation and simply aren't accurate enough. I can measure the solution three different times and easily get three different values for my solution concentration using titration

kits.

"This kind of variability is more than just a cost issue, it's a food safety one as well, especially in our ready-to-eat area. I must mix the sanitizer strong enough so that it is effective. However, if I mix the solution over 400 ppm, I have to rinse the surface or the sanitizer is then an adulterant and I've got a food hazard on my hands. We want to put out a safe product and the LIGHTNING MVP helps me do that."

"Finally," concludes Wakefield, "not only am I measuring my sanitizers more accurately with the MVP Conductivity Probe, I save time, too. I'd say I have an extra 30 minutes per day that I used to spend going back and forth through the plant, gathering samples, titrating, adjusting the mix, then resampling and titrating again. Now, I just place the probe in the mixture, press a button and receive the sanitizer concentration in parts-per-million. It's been a huge time saver."

Says Kressner, "We're continually trying to provide more value to our customers and the LIGHTNING MVP Conductivity Probe is the most recent example of that. We know that our customers' budgets are tight and they are continually asked by their managers to do more with less. We plan to keep adding capabilities to the LIGHTNING MVP and help those concerned with food safety, like Mike Wakefield and Ray's Wholesale Meat, keep their quality high while keeping their costs down."

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