

MBA Poultry Harnesses the Power of LIGHTNING

Cutting-edge innovation is what MBA Poultry, home of the air-chilled Smart Chicken®, is all about. This poultry processor, based in Waverly, NE, introduced air-chilled birds to the United States eight years ago, pioneering this safe, clean and efficient process (www.smartchicken.com). By using air instead of the traditional water immersion as part of their processing, MBA Poultry produces high quality poultry with superior taste and texture.



This focus on excellence extends throughout MBA's operations, particularly in their Quality Assurance Department. Air-chilling eliminates cross contamination that can occur when birds are dipped one after the other into a cold ice water bath. This benefit, however, can be lost if the birds are exposed to contamination from equipment that has not been properly cleaned and sanitized.

Jennifer Fitzgerald, QA Manager at MBA Poultry is particularly aware of this, and brought in the LIGHTNING MVP® from BioControl Systems, Inc., a worldwide leader in food safety testing based in Bellevue, Washington to validate her sanitation programs (www.biocontrolsys.com). The LIGHTNING MVP is a single instrument that measures, records and analyzes results validating both HACCP and hygiene programs.

"The eye doesn't tell you everything," says Ms. Fitzgerald. "ATP testing validates the sanitation of equipment both pre-operation and throughout the day. I chose the LIGHTNING MVP because it's a great tool. I had used it at another company and was impressed with both the LIGHTNING MVP system and BioControl as a company. The LIGHTNING MVP is accurate and easy-to-use. The swabs are convenient both to use—activation occurs by simply pressing down the plunger, no shaking required—and to store as they're room temperature stable. This is particularly handy as we're always short on space in the lab refrigerators."

"I really relied on the LIGHTNING MVP when we opened up our new plant," adds Fitzgerald. "When I was setting up the environmental monitoring program, I did a lot of swabbing for ATP to determine where our trouble spots would be. These became locations where we now test for both ATP and do traditional plating."

LIGHTNING MVP is also used to ensure the hygiene of food-contact surfaces that may not typically get swabbed and tested. "We also audit the containers we use to transfer product from our slaughter facility to our processing site," continues Fitzgerald. "This is an area where cross-contamination can occur and we want to be sure that anything our poultry touches is properly cleaned. The LIGHTNING MVP provides results that I can count on to support our environmental monitoring program."

The LIGHTNING MVP monitors ATP to validate plant sanitation efficacy, as well as HACCP parameters such as temperature, pH, conductivity, and concentration of sanitizers and cleaners. Although MBA Poultry has not yet implemented these measures, Fitzgerald says these additional options do make a difference. "If I want to expand, it's nice to know the option is there."

Gaining Real Insight Into the Sanitation Program

Beyond the instrument and swabs, Fitzgerald also likes the LIGHTNING MVP software. "Really the whole system is so easy-to-use. Entering test points and uploading data are quick and intuitive."

Results from testing can be uploaded to a PC for archiving and analysis with a single click of a button. However, MBA Poultry doesn't do their own reporting on ATP test results. They rely on the LIGHTNING Index Proficiency Program, a confidential reporting program offered by BioControl. A download of monthly test results are sent electronically to BioControl where automated reports on single or multiple plants are generated and returned to MBA Poultry. These reports compare ATP results from across multiple plant locations as well as against relevant industry benchmarks.

According to Fitzgerald, using the LIGHTNING Index Proficiency Program to report on their ATP results is very easy and highly useful, "It takes no time at all for what you get." The reporting program graphs results on all test points, as well as particular test points of interest and/or groups of test points. Positive and negative controls are also highlighted, providing insight into a company's entire sanitation monitoring program.

Fitzgerald uses the comparisons against others in her industry most. "While I like to compare our two plants, since one is a slaughter facility and the other does further processing, I don't expect their test results to match. However, I do see how our results compare to others in the meat processing industry. This gives me an idea of how our sanitation program compares industry-wide. If I see a month where we're a little higher than average, I contact our sanitation manager and let him know what I'm seeing on my reports. Then I watch the next few months and expect to see a reduction in our test results."

"It's satisfying to see a company like MBA Poultry use the LIGHTNING MVP system so thoroughly," states Kathy Drommerhausen, Hygiene Product Manager for BioControl. "Just like MBA Poultry, we work hard to produce a high quality product that stands out in the market. By offering tools like the LIGHTNING MVP and the LIGHTNING Index Proficiency Program we hope to make our customers' sanitation and HACCP monitoring programs easier to implement and more effective."



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