

Code Assurance

Reduce coding errors during meat and poultry product changeovers

The challenge

Coding in the meat and poultry industry is becoming increasingly complex. With a greater demand for case-ready and pre-packed prepared meats and a tighter international regulatory focus on food safety, meat and poultry producers have more codes to keep track of than ever before. More unique codes mean greater risk for coding errors, which can be costly for meat and poultry producers due to product rework, regulatory fines and recalls.

The Videojet advantage

Meat and poultry producers look to Videojet to provide a wide range of easy-to-use coders and accessories that make putting the right code on the right product almost error proof. Two of Videojet's Code Assurance accessories include:

- A handheld scanner added to Videojet coders enables quick and accurate code loading during a product changeover
- Networked solutions with Videojet's CLARISUITE™ software enable centralized code management, removing message creation and selection from the production floor

Why is Code Assurance Important?

In today's regulatory environment, meat and poultry product coding is becoming increasingly more difficult to manage. With a push to provide case ready cuts of fresh meat and additional flavors of processed and prepared meats sent internally, meat and poultry producers now manage more codes per production line than ever before. Code Assurance is designed to ensure that the correct code is applied in the correct location on the correct product, which reduces risk, costly product recalls, and expensive product rework.

Increased regulatory scrutiny of food safety has created enhanced product and date code requirements that vary by region. Where simple Julian dates were typically acceptable in the past, codes today may require country of origin, country of slaughter, country of cutting/de-boning, allergen information, product identification numbers, lot numbers, animal reference codes and even bar codes. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture began requiring Country of Origin Labeling in 2009, mandating that all meat and poultry products list the source of the food along with the sell-by date. Similar, yet more stringent requirements have been in place in Europe since 2000 and other countries globally have comparable regulations.

New coding complexity from additional product types and new code regulations have led to more code combinations. With most facilities producing different products on the same day and the same packaging line, more codes leads to additional changeovers while increasing the opportunities for code error. Entering the wrong code can be caused by simply pressing the wrong key, causing downtime, product rework and potential recalls. Meat and poultry producers should therefore choose coding equipment with Code Assurance to guarantee the easiest, most error-proof coding possible.

How Can You Ensure the Correct Code Every Time?

While there are many systems designed to help prevent errors in code entry, there are two simple coding accessories that help make code changes easier during product changeovers.

Bar code scanner

A simple handheld bar code scanner can be attached to a coder to easily facilitate code loading using a product UPC code or a job card. Bar code scanners are a relatively inexpensive way to reduce the risk of selecting the wrong code when changing over to a different production run. A handheld bar code scanner plugs into the bottom of a coder that either has internal memory or is connected to a network. At installation, all codes used for the specific line are pre-programmed into the coder or on the network along with a UPC code for each package type. Then, during a changeover, the line manager simply scans the new package UPC or associated bar code from a job card to automatically retrieve the correct code format and content. No required typing means no room for code errors.

Network

In addition to using a bar code scanner to load product codes in a multi-product operation, coders can be networked to help ensure product code accuracy. Multiple coders can be connected together using common software through a company network and an internet or Ethernet connection. Networking enables centralized message creation and message loading to multiple coders on a line or in a facility.

Setting up a network of coders is ideal for production facilities which:

- Produce a high number of different product packaging types, customize codes for each customer, ship products to multiple countries
- Have many production lines with multiple coding technologies on each
- Receive standard message protocols by product from a corporate or centralized office
- Use a database or ERP system to track inventory information

Connecting coders to a network enables a single person to load codes from a database to multiple coders on the production floor. Once all of the coders are connected to a single network, a production manager can use a computer to create or load specific codes from the saved database. Centralized code management help ensure that all coders on a given line are printing the right message, every time.



The Bottom Line

In the meat and poultry industry, the number and variation of codes are increasing and getting the right code on the right product every time requires constant vigilance. The consequences of marking the wrong code on a product can be dramatic: costly rework, regulatory fines, recalls and even consumer illness. Choosing coders that expertly manage the creation and loading of codes can reduce these risks.

Adding simple accessories such as handheld bar code scanners and network software can dramatically improve code entry accuracy. For example, Videojet's easy-to-use Code Assurance solutions help make the code loading process as error proof as possible during changeovers.

Contact Videojet to discuss your variable coding needs. We can create a customized, integrated coding solution which will prevent coding errors and assure the right code gets on the right product every time.

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