

A new level of packing efficiency for Fairfax

A major UK foodservice meat supplier has automated its packing of diced and minced meat using an Ishida multihead weighing solution designed to cope with sticky products. Fairfax Meadow supplies 15,000 tonnes of chilled and frozen meats to the food industry each year, including 34 million portion-controlled products.

Painstaking packing

Until recently, portioned diced and minced meat products were packed manually. This involved weighing each portion by hand into a plastic bag, which then had to be moved to the packaging machine and emptied into it.

A major drawback of this approach was inaccuracy, not least owing to the fact that some of the weighed product inevitably remained in the plastic bag. This had to be compensated for by overweighing, limiting the potential yield of packed, saleable product.

Even more crucial was the time taken. And any attempt to speed up such a laborious and painstaking process would have had implications for health and safety.

The Fresh Food Weigher combines the speed, accuracy and hygiene of multihead weighing with the benefits of operator supervision.

Sticky challenges, fast-moving solutions

Ishida has introduced a number of advances in recent years in the automated weighing and packing of products once considered difficult to move. These advances include screw feeder multihead weighers and complete weigh-batcher solutions. Taking other factors such as manpower availability into account, the best choice for the degree of stickiness displayed by these particular products at Fairfax Meadows was an Ishida Fresh Food Weigher (FFW).

A 'fresh' approach

The FFW is a multihead weigher: that is it works by selecting that combination of weights from an array of weigh hoppers which best approximates the target weight. However, rather than being in a circle (as with the traditional multihead) they are arranged in a straight line. This opens up the route to the weigh hoppers so that they can be fed via simple belts, which are accessible to supervision by operators. Operator intervention means that one or two people, stationed within comfortable reach of the hopper-feeding belts, can spot and disperse build-ups and obstructions and generally ensure the smooth flow of meat to the hoppers.

The FFW model chosen by Fairfax Meadow was an eight head CCW-NZ-108B-S/20-WP. Like all multiheads, it has pool hoppers which temporarily hold the meat while the weigh hoppers underneath are full. However, it also has



another layer of hoppers beneath the weigh hoppers. These booster hoppers can hold already-weighed meat which has not yet been used in a combination, and their effect is to free up the weigh hoppers while offering the weigher more choices for its combinations, and thus to speed up the weighing process.

Picking up the pace

The new weigher is handling pack sizes from 500g to 2.5kg. A diverting timing hopper at the weigher outlet functions as a distribution system, feeding product into three lanes of a horizontal thermoformer.

Although limited by the speed of the thermoformer, the system is currently turning out 450 to 480 packs per hour depending on target weight. These speeds are far in excess of those attained with the manual system, with considerable savings in labour costs.

A major increase in yield

The effect of the Ishida FFW on accuracy have been significant. As Fairfax Meadow's General Manager Chris Jacob explains:

"With our previous system, giveaway was excessive. Now, we are achieving accuracy to within 2% of target, which is excellent for these types of products, particularly considering that we are operating on minimum weight regulations, so packs cannot be below the displayed weight on the pack."

Maximising effectiveness

Chris Jacob comments further: "We have been delighted with the performance of the Ishida FFW. It has proved to be very reliable and easy to operate and Ishida gave us full training on day-to-day running, cleaning and maintenance, which has helped us to maximise the weigher's effectiveness."



Ishida Europe Limited

11 Kettles Wood Drive
Woodgate Business Park
Birmingham B32 3DB
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)121 607 7700
Fax: +44 (0)121 607 7666
info@ishidaeurope.com

Ishida Czech Republic

Tel: +420 317 844 059
Fax: +420 317 844 052
info@ishidaeurope.cz

Ishida Netherlands

Tel: +31 (0)499 39 3675
Fax: +31 (0)499 39 1887
info@ishida.nl

Ishida France

Tel: +33 (0)1 48 63 83 83
Fax: +33 (0)1 48 63 24 29
info@ishidaeurope.fr

Ishida Romania

Tel: +40 (0)21 589 73 52
Fax: +40 (0)21 310 34 22
info@ishidaeurope.ro

Ishida Germany

Tel: +49 (0)791 945 160
Fax: +49 (0)791 945 1699
info@ishida.de

Ishida South Africa

Tel: +27 (0)11 976 2010
Fax: +27 (0)11 976 2012
ishidasales@ishida.co.za

Ishida Middle East

Tel: +971 (0)4 299 1933
Fax: +971 (0)4 299 1955
ishida@ishida.ae

Ishida Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)41 799 7999
Fax: +41 (0)41 790 3927
info@ishida.ch