CASE STUDY

AUENLAND-KONZEPT KG

Industry: Pet food and animal feed
Application: Coding and marking tin cans
Material: Tin plate

HIGH-QUALITY PET FOOD INSIDE – OUTSIDE MARKING VIA INKJET TECHNOLOGY

CLIENT

The Auenland-Konzept KG has been producing high-quality pet food for dogs and cats since 2002. All products contain natural, fresh, regional, organic ingredients and are free of additives, slaughter waste, preservatives and animal meal.
In 2016, the family business moved to Geislingen-Binsdorf, where the pet food is furthermore hand-crafted with the objective of keeping dogs and cats healthy through good nutrition.

REQUIREMENTS

The process of marking the food cans with the best-before date was both time-consuming and physically strenuous for the employees. After sealing, each can was provided with BBD markings by hand. So the employees had to heave the heavy can trays around several times.

To be able to produce more efficiently – and to support company growth – the Auenland-Konzept KG saw an urgent need for action.

SOLUTION

The process step of marking was actually integrated into the can sealing process. As a result, one work step could be entirely eliminated. The marking of the cans is now done automatically when the lid, which is applied to the can, passes by. This saves Auenland costs and is a source of physical relief for workers.

Moreover, compared to labeling, the BBD marking adheres firmly to the can and cannot fall off.

The efficient marking of the Auenland cans by the LEIBINGER JET2neo remained unchanged even after moving to the new company facilities in 2016.

The LEIBINGER JET2neo print head is integrated into the can sealing machine. So the pet food cans can be marked automatically during the sealing process.

The Auenland concept prints the BBD on pet food cans with a LEIBINGER JET2neo

Marking and coding solutions are not only in demand for complex production lines. Small and medium-sized companies are also looking for efficient solutions to print their products with, for instance, a best-before date or a LOT number. The Auenland-Konzept KG produces high-quality pet food that very deliberately stands out from supermarket pet food. Since 2014, the cans of dog and cat food have been marked with an industrial inkjet printer from LEIBINGER.

Her work as an animal healer had shown Angelika Stifel, Managing Director of the Auenland-Konzept KG, that most industrially produced, supermarket pet food causes diseases in some dogs and cats. As soon as the owners started cooking food for their animals themselves, following Ms. Stifel's recipes, their four-legged companions felt much better. In 2002, this gave rise to the idea of producing and selling pet food that is as high-quality as home-cooked food. The founder took up the challenge together with her family and today runs a successful, sustainable company together with her daughter Anna Jetter.

Inkjet marking saves one work step and money

Today, Auenland-Konzept from Baden-Württemberg supplies quality pet food to several thousand customers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland – and the trend is rising. This success was paralleled by the fact that the company gradually optimized the production of its pet food. In 2014, for example, the company invested in an industrial inkjet printer from LEIBINGER, which prints the cans with a best-before date. "This was an important step for us so that our production can keep up with the growth," explains authorized signatory Anna Jetter. "Until now, the cans were marked with labels. Since the changeover, our workers no longer need to heave the heavy can trays around and then mark the cans separately after sealing. This eliminates one work step, which saves us money and is a source of physical relief for our employees."

The LEIBINGER JET2neo printer is integrated into the can sealing machine. An Auenland employee places a freshly filled, open can in the machine and begins the process. While the lid is guided to the can by the can sealing machine's catch arm, it passes the print head. It is automatically printed with the

Anna Jetter, authorized signatory of the Auenland-Konzept KG and Nikolaos Pappas, area sales manager at Paul Leibinger GmbH & Co. KG at the Auenland shop.

Auenland-Konzept sells its high-quality pet food via its online shop and in the shop located directly in the production building.

best-before date – without contact. The can is closed with the lid. The employee then replaces the sealed can with a new, open can. It is no longer necessary to label the cans with the BBD later. Labeling is carried out parallel to the can sealing, without an additional work step. Moreover, in contrast to labeling, BBD marking with ink adheres firmly to the can and cannot fall off.

After sealing, the cans are sterilized via boiling. For this reason, a black high-temperature ink is used when printing the cans, so that the expiry date is just as legible after the sterilization process as before. "To select the most suitable ink, we carried out various tests in the LEIBINGER test laboratory before delivering the printer, to be sure that the ink meets all of Auenland-Konzept's requirements," explains Nikolaos Pappas, LEIBINGER area sales manager. The chosen ink is especially suitable for food packaging that needs to be boiled after marking.

A successful moon landing

"For us, such innovations are like a moon landing! We are totally enthusiastic. The printer works so easily and is perfectly integrated into our workflow," says Anna Jetter. With a single touch of the display, the printer starts up and is ready for operation within a minute. On start-up, the print job with the best-before date is set automatically, as the BBD is exactly two years after the date of production. After all cans of a pet food variety have been sealed, the printer is shut down again with just two touches of the display.

The unique Sealtronic feature prevents ink from drying out during production breaks

The integrated automatic Sealtronic nozzle seal ensures that the ink does not dry up in the printer during production breaks. The catcher tube and nozzle in the print head form an airtight circuit: no ink can escape from the circuit and no air can enter. This means that the ink always remains liquid, just like a sealed paint can. The inkjet printer is ready for use at any time – without the need to clean the print head. "For single-shift productions such as those at Auenland, the automatic nozzle seal is a decisive advantage. Even after longer downtimes, e.g. during company holidays, the printer is available immediately," says Nikolaos Pappas. Sealtronic is integrated as standard into all LEIBINGER inkjet printer lines – from the Entry Line to the High Speed Line.

The contactless printing of the best-before date on the cans works according to the continuous inkjet principle: in the print head of the JET2neo, a continuous ink jet is broken down into tens of thousands of individual drops. The droplets, which here are intended to represent a best-before date, are electrostatically charged and brought onto the product by means of a deflection electrode without contact. Unused drops of ink are returned to the ink circuit via the catcher tube.

LEIBINGER continues to impress even years later

In 2016, the Auenland-Konzept KG moved its production, warehouse and shop a few kilometers away to a new building in Geislingen-Binsdorf. Further process steps were optimized and made more efficient – the marking of the cans with the LEIBINGER JET2neo, however, was kept as before: "The handling and the uncomplicated marking still impresses us," Jetter sums up six years after purchasing the LEIBINGER CIJ-System.

Meanwhile, Auenland-Konzept offers more than 25 high-quality food types and 200 other products for dogs, cats and horses. The pet food products contain natural, fresh, regional, organic ingredients and are free of additives, slaughter waste, preservatives and animal meal – for the benefit and wellbeing of the animals.

About Paul Leibinger GmbH & Co. KG

LEIBINGER is a global specialist in coding and marking systems headquartered in Germany. The third-generation family-run company, founded in 1948, develops and produces industrial inkjet printers at its site in Tuttlingen, Baden-Wuerttemberg, with close to 300 employees. The CIJ systems distinguish themselves through their high quality standard and a fully automatic nozzle sealing technology, which minimises the printers' cleaning requirements.

The global network with over 150 service partners and subsidiaries in the USA and China ensures that LEIBINGER maintains a close relationship with its customers all over the world.

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