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QualiTru Sampling Systems helps improve food safety with in-process sampling data

By Rena Archwamety

OAKDALE, Minn. — Dairy processors are experiencing additional pressures with safety, quality, and consistency of a product, as well as making processes more efficient. QualiTru Sampling Systems, a pioneer in aseptic and representative sampling for the dairy and other liquid food industries, aims to be a valuable partner in addressing and solving these issues.

“Having reliable data is key to making informed decisions on processing. Your test result is only as accurate as your sample,” says Mara Herschbach, marketing manager, QualiTru Sampling Systems.

“We work with our customers to understand their issues and what they’re trying to solve,” she adds. “We work with their quality teams on process monitoring plans to verify micro and bacteria counts and document critical control points (CCP) to ensure equipment meets specs and the system is optimized. We also advise on troubleshooting sample points to compare bacteria counts throughout the process and clean-in-place (CIP) verification for hygiene effectiveness.”

The company’s founder, Darrell Bigalke, a dairy food safety consultant and entrepreneur, previously had worked in microbiology with Ecolab. Inspired to improve food safety after two devastating foodborne illness outbreaks in the mid-1980s linked to dairy, Bigalke’s mission was to promote aseptic sampling for the dairy industry at a time when regulations focused solely on final product testing.

Bigalke founded Quality Management Inc. (QMI) in 1983 through an agreement with Ned Galloway, the inventor of a patented multi-channel septum that allowed discrete samples to be drawn aseptically and segregated for analysis across the process. QMI, which began as a two-person operation in St. Paul, Minnesota, eventually became QualiTru Sampling Systems Inc., a leader in the science of aseptic and representative sampling for milk and other liquid foods.

“Darrell recognized the need for monitoring microbial contamination to improve product safety,” Herschbach says. “Our systems allow testing beyond the final product to the whole system. If there are contamination spikes inline, our sampling products help troubleshoot and pinpoint where those issues lie.”

QualiTru Sampling Systems helps monitor quality from farm to the final product. Its instruments can collect representative samples of raw milk while the truck is being unloaded at the processor’s receiving bay to verify product for payment and bacterial measurements, as well as throughout the process to perform diagnostics, system quality checks and CIP checks, and sample for overall milk quality testing.

“Our ports installed on tanker trucks improve operation efficiency. Sam-

pling from the ground for Appendix N antibiotic testing prior to entering the receiving bay reduces congestion and wait time while mitigating the risks associated with the traditional method of sampling by climbing up onto the truck,” Herschbach says.

QualiTru systems also help national dairy brands maintain consistency and quality in their products from plant to plant. For instance, at cheese processors, a TruStream Sanitary Tank Port installed on the exterior of a silo or bulk tank allows closed access for inoculating milk with specific cultures, thus reducing the chance for contamination. For cultured dairy processors, its

system is ideal for collecting samples to perform post-pasteurization testing and provides aseptic access to the bulk starter tank when inoculating the milk with specific cultures.

“Our product also helps our customers maintain brand quality consistency. For instance, a consumer purchasing a favorite dairy brand from one state to the next is ensured the same great taste, consistency and shelf-life, regardless of where the product was processed,” Herschbach says.

To help serve its clients and the industry at large, QualiTru works with industry organizations, universities, and individual companies through

consultation for sampling best practices or process monitoring to identify or prevent in-process contamination. QualiTru also participates in educational webinars and speaking engagements on the importance of aseptic sampling and liquid food quality systems.

“We take an educational, problem-solving approach to providing dairy and liquid food industry solutions to produce safe, high-quality products,” Herschbach says. “How can we help reduce the chances of future contaminations or bacterial outbreaks from ever claiming another life? That was the company’s original vision and making food safe remains the vision today.” CMN

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