Retort Processing Indicators

by Dainard Jackson

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Food canneries must comply with various legal requirements to ensure consistent food safety, one of which is to use a heat sensitive indicator that reacts during the sterilization process, helping to distinguish unprocessed cans from processed ones. This is one part of a number of measures considered good practice and essential in ensuring that potential hazards are anticipated, controlled and avoided through the implementation of good procedures.

Traditionally, this has been achieved by using autoclave tape, an adhesive backed tape which is printed with diagonal stripes of a lead-based ink. This ink usually reacts to heat and heat alone, and is fairly inaccurate â€“ weâ€™ve had one customer test it by dropping it in his tea â€“ to give a full colour change! The tape is also very difficult to keep as a permanent record for quality assurance procedures. Whilst it has its uses â€“ indeed we continue to sell it â€“ the tape is also very difficult to keep as a permanent record for quality assurance procedures.

This tape originates in the medical sterilization industry and has been superseded in that sector by more technical inks that give users far more information and additional capabilities than the lead ink could ever offer â€“ such as those manufactured by SteriTec in the USA.

Temperature Indicators is a global distributor of the SteriTec Retort Checkrange. In order to react properly, these canning indicators need a process to run for the correct time, at the correct temperature and to have saturated steam as the sterilant medium. A deficiency in any of those three is an area where a problem in the process could be an issue. The indicator flags the potential problem where autoclave tape would not. The intelligent inks come in 6 grades to suit a variety of processes and are printed on robust card to facility record keeping.

The Retort Check range is seen as the ultimate means of monitoring and controlling cannery retort processes and outperforms every alternative. The indicator tags are simple to use once the correct grade has been chosen, the results very easy to read. Inks change from purple to green giving a simple way to check and verify a thermal process. An incomplete change signals an error in processing or a malfunction of equipment, something autoclave tape cannot achieve!

We keep substantial stocks of this very popular line in the UK and in Colorado, US, to ensure a rapid and cost effective delivery to our customers all over the world.

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Dainard Jackson - About Author:
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