

Calf Meat attractively packed with **MULTIVAC**



Jos Rouwendaal, Meat Processing Manager at Ekro in Apeldoorn.

Jos Rouwendaal, Meat Processing Manager at Ekro in Apeldoorn, is a very busy man with a clear vision. Whether it is about Ekro's calf meat, about the "Safety Guard" quality control system of the VanDrie Group to which Ekro belongs, or about the new MULTIVAC R 275 thermoforming packaging machine, Jos Rouwendaal cares passionately about every aspect of his daily work at the largest calf meat producer in the world.

Around 400,000 calves were slaughtered in 2014 at Ekro, which has been part of the VanDrie Group since 1994. The calf meat is delivered to domestic and foreign customers in the retail, processing and catering industries, and it is supplied in a wide range of units from whole animal carcasses to ready-to-cook calf meat products.

Ekro has its own sales office for the Italian market, while Spain and Portugal, as well as Greece, are served through sales agents.

Direct supply

"We have increased our focus on consumer packs in recent years, which we supply direct to retailers for consumers who want high-quality calf meat", reports Jos Rouwendaal, Meat Processing Manager at Ekro. "Our Consumer Products Department is responsible for these sales.

The calf meat is portioned, spiced in some cases, then packed under modified atmosphere before being sold under own label or brand name. We also pack larger primal cuts in this way for further abattoir processing. In 2014 for example, Ekro

supplied calf meat to branches of Metro in nine countries. We supply Albert Heijn and Jumbo supermarkets in the Netherlands with consumer packs".

The international demand for calf meat is rising, and Jos Rouwendaal adds: "Five percent of the calf meat produced by Ekro remains in the Netherlands, the remainder is exported. The export share has increased, particularly exports to

Germany. Italy remains by far Calf Meat Country no. 1, but also in France, much more calf meat is being eaten. The VanDrie Group is currently making renewed efforts to increase sales to the USA where import restrictions for calf meat are slowly being relaxed again. China is similarly a sales market that is up and coming, and we already export to the Middle East and Far East".

Safety Guard

"Safety Guard" is the quality control system for all companies within the VanDrie Group and, as Jos Rouwendaal explains, it forms the basis for all activities at Ekro.

The system is based on the international ISO 22000 standard, which contains requirements for producers that apply worldwide. The most important element of the system is traceability over the entire production chain. "Safety Guard makes it possible to have complete traceability of all the calf meat going through our boning operation. For every single piece of calf meat, we can immediately establish from which animal it comes and in which stall it was born. The individual

ear mark of the calf is used to provide this information. The assignment of the mark number to all the individual pieces of meats is maintained at every change of location in the production process".

MultiFresh™ vacuum skin packs

Ekro has extended its range of equipment in recent years with a number of different MULTIVAC machines. Among these, since 2014, is the R 275 thermoforming packaging machine which has an additional sealing station.

This means three types of pack are available to Ekro: a MultiFresh™ skin pack, a MAP pack with modified atmosphere packaging (where only the second sealing station is used) and a so-called twin-top-web pack. In the case of this last pack version, the pack is sealed with an additional upper web. This enables a herb mixture to be included in the intermediate space between the two upper webs.

MultiFresh™ vacuum skin packs are characterised by a special upper web which drapes tightly over the product and covers the entire surface like a second skin.

This upper web is sealed to the complete surface area of the lower web. Ekro also regularly uses the R 275 for producing MultiFresh™ packs. A wide range of different meat products are packed in this way for the German discounter Aldi Nord, including ribeye and entrecôte of calf, as well as marinated calf scallops and calf medallions.

"Up until March 2014, the meat products for Aldi Nord were packed in the classic MAP pack, before it was mutually agreed after discussion to make the

Exclusive on MULTIVAC

change to MultiFresh™", says Jos Rouwendaal, who has a great deal of experience in the special properties of MultiFresh™.

Fresh presentation

Jos Rouwendaal finds the new MultiFresh™ packs more attractive and modern-looking than the traditional MAP or skin packs. "With skin packs, the seal seams are still visible after packing. With MultiFresh™ the film encloses the meat very tightly - one does not see any seal seams or often even the upper web itself. Thanks to this 'second skin', the products have a fresher appearance and also a longer shelf life than even with MAP packs. The robust MultiFresh™ packs enable them to be packed in boxes quickly, and can also be stacked very efficiently, making them easier to transport.

MultiFresh™ has long been widespread for game and poultry, but now this type of pack is also becoming more popular for meat products"

The demand for MultiFresh™ packs from retailers and other customers is constantly growing. "We are currently conducting packaging tests for several customers on the R 275 thermoforming packaging machine", says Jos Rouwendaal. "These customers currently still use MAP packs and are considering whether they should change to MultiFresh™. In the retail sector however, such decisions are not made from one day to the next, but rather over the longer term. However, MultiFresh™ is particularly well suited to high-value meat products, such as calf meat"

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