



Application note



Dairy

Trends on dairy code placement: Meeting the needs of retailers, consumers, brand marketers and production



With global industry growth forecast in the low single-digits¹, dairy producers who can meet emerging consumer flavor and packaging needs will be best positioned to outpace industry averages. While dairy products are an intrinsic component of family food consumption, many consumers tend to buy dairy products based on necessity, price, and quality.

The challenge:

Many dairy producers place codes on package lids because it is an accessible printing location. The downside is that lids can be easily misplaced or thrown away which means that the code, and its purpose (easy identification of freshness and production information) is also lost. To help solve this issue for retailers and consumers, producers are moving codes to the main part of product packaging. This move is welcomed by brand owners who want to move codes away from packaging graphics and branding. However, the move can be a challenge for coding equipment not engineered to print in confined areas, especially at high speeds.

Videojet advantage:

By their nature, Dairy products have short shelf lives, are best when consumed as fresh as possible, and are susceptible to spoilage. This makes having readily visible, clear, accurate and consistent codes a must. Printing these codes directly on the main package body requires greater durability and flexibility from coding equipment versus coding on easier locations such as the lid. A global leader in continuous inkjet (CIJ) printing, Videojet offers solutions that print at high speeds and can print in virtually any orientation, and on most packaging materials – even in confined spaces. The 45 degree slanted printhead design of the Videojet 1860 provides more mounting options to position the printhead as close to the package as possible, especially in angled and gable top applications. Additionally, the positive airflow of our patented CleanFlow™ printhead helps keep the printhead clean of buildup and debris, which is especially useful when marking upward on the bottom of products. With outstanding print quality in cold, wet and moist conditions and less required maintenance, Videojet printers routinely achieve 99.9% availability and are ideal for providing pristine codes in dairy production.

¹ 2016 Dairy Market Trends in Packaging and Processing Operations.
The Association for Packaging and Processing Technologies, January 2017.

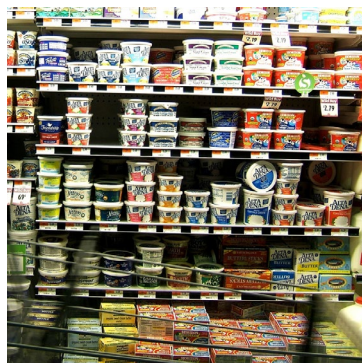
The risk and importance of code placement



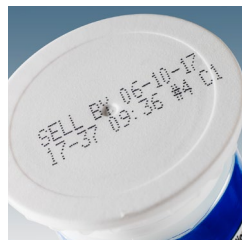
Code placement on lids

With a lack of standardization for date and lot code placement on dairy products, many manufacturers place codes on the side or top of the lid. The risk here is that if the lid is lost, consumers and retailers lose visibility to the expiration date and lot information. Without this information, stock cannot be rotated and managed effectively and recall efforts can be significantly hindered. Moreover, if consumers lose access to this information, they are not likely to purchase the product which erodes product sales and potentially brand reputation.

The risks related to the loss of lot codes on lids can be seen in a major 2015 dairy recall in the United States. A large producer recalled eight million gallons of ice cream due to listeria contamination. On its website, the producer instructed consumers how to identify products which originated in the affected creameries using specific lot code text. These codes, however, were printed on the inside of the container lids, making such information more difficult for both retailers and consumers to access, and also increasing the likelihood that some consumers had already discarded this information along with the lids.



Producers are being asked by retailers to place codes on the main body of packaging. This move is good for consumers, retailers and producers wanting improved visibility for product freshness and tracking of perishable items. Brand owners also welcome the change as they fight for recognition on crowded store shelves.





Achieving balance between production and marketing needs

Brand owners are likely to embrace a move to coding in defined spaces on the main part of packaging. Moving codes will allow marketers to optimize the packaging appearance without the distractions of codes on container lids or foils. It is also important to consider the production implications of moving codes, including throughput, code quality, and printer maintenance. Codes must still be clean, clear and readily visible. A move to a more difficult printing location must not adversely impact overall throughput. And, finally, the printer needs to be able to handle the new requirements.

Things to consider include:

- Ability of your coder to print in a different orientations (i.e. print upward onto the underside of your container)
- Flexibility of your coder to print in constrained spaces on your package
- Set-up of your line and coding equipment and whether or not reorientation is possible
- Capacity of your coder to successfully print high quality code in varying font sizes
- Required speeds of your production
- Challenges of your production environment
- Characteristics of your packaging (visual design, shape or material) that could affect code quality



Examples of codes impeding product messaging

Conclusion

Dairy producers are beginning to make the shift from coding on lids to coding on the main container of the product. This shift is intended to satisfy retailers, to help bolster consumer confidence and sales, as well as assist producers in the event of a recall. Marketers are also likely to welcome this change for unhindered brand messaging on product packaging. As with any change to product packaging though, it is important to carefully review and address the needs of all stakeholders, including your production.



The bottom line

Videojet understands the importance of balancing the needs of your retailers, consumers and marketers with those of your production. To help address these needs, we offer a range of CIJ solutions ideal for dairy operations that provide:

- High resolution codes on a wide range of materials including plastic, glass bottles, metal, paperboard and flexible film
- High adhesion specialty inks that are ideal for coding in temperature and moisture-variable environments
- Patented CleanFlow™ printhead technology that helps keeps your printhead clean and performing at optimal levels
- Highly flexible, high speed printers that produce dual and tri-line codes with exceptional print quality, even in tight spaces

**For more information
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