



Case Study

SPARRER SAUSAGE GETS AN ADDED SENSE OF SECURITY VIA LOMA SYSTEMS' METAL DETECTORS

If you ask the people at Sparrer Sausage Company why metal detectors from Loma Systems, Inc. are their first choice, they will tell you that it's all about "a sense of security."

Sparrer Sausage is a privately held, family-run processor of summer sausage, chorizo and barbecue ribs. And although the company relies heavily on vacuum packaging for many of its products, the other ever-present packaging component is the metal clip.

"We use approximately 180,000 clips per day, two per chub," explains Sparrer Plant Manager Jesus Morales.

With so many metal clips present in the processing environment, Sparrer Foods goes the extra mile to make sure that not a single one leaves the premises lodged inside one of its products.

Morales explains that the Sparrer plant is run in a decentralized fashion and illustrates the point by bringing in two of his quality control people, Angelica Sanchez and Ernesto Trevino to explain the process. "Our goal ultimately is to have two metal detectors on each line - one before packaging and one after," Sanchez says.

Currently, the company operates seven lines and two shifts. Sparrer started purchasing metal detectors from Loma approximately five years ago. The fifth, and most recent unit - the Loma IQ² Harsh Head model - was installed at the beginning of summer and incorporates all of Loma's latest technology improvements, such as performance validation, single-circuit board design, 16-bit processing power, network compatibility, and UL listing, to name a few.

A redesigned control panel replaces text with an icon-driven display. This offers greater communication flexibility for multi-national companies or in multi-language work environments. The 20-character, dot-matrix display is bright, easy-to-read and flexible. It allows the operator to select the display to best meet the company's production objectives.

Much of the plant operates in a "modular" fashion, which enables many of the metal detectors to be wheeled from one line to another to be used as production demands dictate. In five of the seven lines, the product goes through the metal detectors before the item is vacuum packaged. In two of the lines, detection is employed after packaging.



Loma Case Study

Loma's IQ² Harsh Head model is designed to handle harsh wash down procedures while ensuring a waterproof environment and a long operating life.

"I've never seen anything so accurate," Morales explains. "It finds really small pieces. This gives us a sense of security. If the units are properly used, you will get results."

And this sense of security was further enhanced when Loma was recently awarded an Equipment Acceptance Certificate for its IQ² unit under U.S. Department of Agriculture's criteria for metal detection equipment. Loma is the first and only manufacturer of metal detectors to have earned this accreditation, which certifies that USDA's hygiene requirements for the design of meat and poultry processing equipment have been met.

"Having the newly-enacted USDA machinery approval on our line of metal detectors reaffirms not only our commitment to the meat and poultry industry, but assures those processors that Loma equipment will stand up to the scrutiny of local government inspectors and to the harsh environment to which they will be subjected," Gary Wilson, president, Loma Systems, explains.

In addition to the peace of mind Sparrer gets from the IQ² metal detector, Trevino points out that the unit requires "zero maintenance and wash down is very easy." In addition to the sanitation aspects, Trevino explains that the unit can contain parameters for 100 different products at one time.



"It's easy to calibrate. You just run a product through a couple of times and the metal detector uses its own power to 'read' size, width, etc.," Trevino says. And when the unit finds a metal clip - which happens approximately once a week - the conveyor belt stops and a light at the top is illuminated to signal the contaminant.

Quality Assurance Director Maureen Carpenter says, "Once metal is discovered, we can go into our paperwork and determine the source. We have complete confidence in the metal detector's ability to do its job."

Carpenter also points out the service aspects of the relationship. "Service is key. The support Loma gives us is phenomenal. For example, we have many Spanish-speaking employees. Loma sends us bilingual representatives to help train our people."

And what are some of the downstream quality assurance plans for Sparrer Sausage? In addition to adding additional metal detectors down the road, the company is also looking at adding Loma's software to the metal detectors so that data collection is automated.

"Additionally, the certification of Loma's metal detectors provides an extra measure of assurance to plant management. It asserts that the equipment is designed to eliminate the bacteria or other sanitation concerns that are so common with food processing equipment," Wilson says.

In turn, Sparrer Sausage President Brian Graves says that by installing equipment that has met USDA certification criteria his own sales force has an advantage. "It's important to point out to our customer's the extend to which we aggressively go after quality assurance goals."

Sparrer Sausage Company was founded in 1938 and is a privately-held, Chicago based processor of summer sausage, chorizo and barbecue ribs. The company sells its products under its own

Loma Case Study

brands and also private labels for grocery chains and mass merchandisers such as Kroger, Aldi, Wal-Mart, etc.
