



WestFarm Dairy Guarantees Cold Chain Control

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Case Study: WestFarm Foods Tightens the Cold Chain with FreshLoc Technologies

To obtain annual dairy and related food sales topping 1.3 billion, WestFarm Foods, the processing and marketing arm of the Northwest Dairy Association, moves a lot of product very efficiently. But they're always looking for ways to improve. Marcus Crawford, WestFarm Foods Logistics Supervisor in the Boise plant, recently solved two problems by addressing one.

Challenge: From silo to loading dock, the WestFarm Foods operation is temperature controlled. But when product is loaded on trucks, it doesn't always leave immediately. So WestFarm would keep the load on the truck, parked in the yard as temporary warehouse space. Although the trucks are, of course, refrigerated, they were not monitored; someone from the plant had to check them periodically, and when a reefer went out, there was no record of how long it had been down. "Storing in the yard worked", states Crawford. "Only every once in awhile, the reefer would go out on a trailer, and although we were checking the temperatures, we'd miss the critical timing, and lose a load."

Seeking a solution, Crawford got a recommendation, oddly enough, from his chemical vendor. "My Ecolab rep pointed me to a temperature monitoring system, FreshLoc", states Crawford. FreshLoc provides wireless temperature monitoring systems, using RFID technology, for the food supply chain—storage, processing, and transport. They have loggers that track and record temperatures for up to 48 hours. Crawford liked the fact that truck temperature records could be integrated with records for his other storage areas. He installed FreshLoc on all his trucks, and in his remote storage facility in Fruitland, Idaho.

Solution: Yard storage temperatures are now tracked 24-7, automatically. When drivers pull into the WestFarm yard, they log in their trailer on a screen at the dock, and either enable or disable monitoring. While monitoring is enabled, the loggers send current temperatures to WestFarm's FreshLoc site, and if temperatures get out of range, alerts are sent to Crawford and his crew.

"Now I get the news in time to do something about it, even if it's the middle of the night," he confirms. "It's saved several loads." Not only are the alerts timely, but no one has to walk around the yard checking temperatures on the trucks anymore.

When the driver pulls out and hits "disable connection" the logger continues to track and store temperatures throughout his entire route. On his return that record is downloaded into the system. Crawford soon realized he had the capability to look at temperature records for the entire trip. So he could see if the door stood open for an hour, for instance, or whether a particular truck required maintenance because it was running gradually warmer as time progressed. Now he has proof of temperature that is valid for the entire trip.

WestFarm Foods focused on being a state-of-the-art dairy operation starting in 2000. Part of its goal has been an emphasis on completely current technology. FreshLoc Technologies has been a valuable part of that initiative.