

Stainless Steel Transforms Meat Processing Plant

Over 17 tonnes of stainless steel has been used for the upgrade of a premier meat processing plant to support the growing local and global demands of Australian red meat supply.

The Australian Lamb Company (ALC) currently exports lamb to more than 60 countries worldwide, and recently secured a 10-year contract to process lamb for Coles supermarkets in eastern Australia.

ALC's multi-million dollar investment to support demand and increase production capacity included the expansion and upgrade of its meat processing operation in Colac, Victoria.

ASSDA Member and Accredited Fabricator Stainless Steel Associated Fabricators (SSAF) Australia was engaged to design, manufacture and install 65 box conveyors spanning 400m, three access walkovers and 30 production tables for the plant's re-engineered automated boning room.

The conveyor system was designed by SSAF Australia with input from the ALC's production team to achieve optimum process flow. The main criterion for the mechanical design was excellent product transfer, mechanical reliability and optimal hygiene through easy cleaning of the conveyor's belt and frame.

The box conveyors are a semi-modular design using the latest SEW-EURODRIVE MOVIGEAR® SERVO motors and gearboxes. Compared with conventional motors and gearboxes, SSAF Australia's Managing Director Chris Stacey said these systems are significantly more efficient in reducing power usage and allowing a wider speed range without loss in torque.

Grade 304 stainless steel with a 2B finish was specified and used for the upgrade, supplied by ASSDA Sponsors Atlas Steels, Midway Metals and Vulcan Stainless.

Grade 304 stainless steel is a standard requirement in the food industry where acid and salt are not present in the production process. With rigorous standards in food safety and hygiene to adhere to, the boning room must be washed down daily and to this end, the conveyors incorporate CIP (clean in place) systems.

Stacey said that grade 304 2B stainless steel with a PVC protective coating is the material of choice for their food grade equipment. 'By taking care during manufacture and polishing welds to 320G, 2B is superior to a No 4 or bead blasted finish. The smoother grain structure is much better than No 4 in inhibiting the growth of microorganisms and is easier to clean. Our equipment is regularly swabbed for surface cleanliness and this is critical to our customers' Quality Assurance (QA) requirements.'

With the full scope of works completed within a 6-month timeframe in early September 2016, the increased capacity of ALC's Colac operation has delivered significant benefits for the Australian lamb industry and a boost in the Victorian economy.

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