

# Weigher/bagger facilitates new packaging launch

**Pet food company installs versatile system to handle stand-up, zipper-close pouches in various sizes.**

Judy Rice | Contributing Editor



Oxbow Animal Health, Inc., Murdock, NE, is a worldwide supplier of premium, nutritionally fortified, life-staged food products for small animals such as rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, chinchillas, and pet rats. The company had been using conventional vertical form/fill/seal bagging systems to handle its packaging needs. But at the beginning of 2011, Oxbow introduced a new, more compact bag style with a stand-up base, reclosable zipper system, and updated, high shelf impact graphics for its “Essentials” brand of pet foods.

The new premade LLDPE, quad-bottom bags with pre-attached zippers are custom-designed, 8-color-printed, and supplied by **Poly Cello** ([www.polycello.com](http://www.polycello.com)). Melissa Ross, marketing operations manager at Oxbow, notes, “We are very excited to introduce the updated packaging design for our fortified food bags. The design improvements are the result of listening closely to feedback from our customers.”

To accommodate the new bags, Oxbow wanted a single-source, weighing, filling, and bagging system that could easily handle 10-lb and 5-lb bags and 2-oz treat-bag sizes. The company’s search led them to the Las Vegas System Center of **WeighPack Systems, Inc.** ([www.weighpack.com](http://www.weighpack.com)). Open 7 days per week, 24 hours per day, if required by the customer, the WeighPack Las Vegas System Center offers clients the opportunity to test their own products on integrated packaging machinery.



**NEW LOOK.** The more compact bag style features stand-up base, reclose zipper, and updated graphics.

Oxbow plant manager Jim Wohlers notes, “The visit to the Systems Center was very much a decisive factor in making our equipment purchasing choices. The WeighPack staff was fantastic, and the equipment was ready to demo with our product and packaging when we arrived.”

## ➤ MACHINERY CHOICES AND BENEFITS

After evaluating WeighPack’s equipment, Oxbow opted for a PrimoWeigher 360 14-head combination scale and a Swifty Bagger 3600. The PrimoWeigher 360 incorporates remote, on-line servicing capability which eliminates time delays and costs associated with site visits. The PrimoWeigher 360’s bundled software (including Skype™ and LogMein™) allows WeighPack’s service technicians to connect (via

*“The rapid remote assistance services equate to a great production insurance policy.”*

wireless or land-line) to the weigher through the operating system with the customer’s consent and pin code. So the technicians are immediately available to provide real-time support.

To partner with the weigher, Oxbow chose the Swifty Bagger 3600 horizontal bagging machine with straight flow-through design. In contrast to the older, more conventional rotary designed systems, this bagger houses all the moving parts in the front of the machine and all the mechanics in the back. This compact design configuration makes the bagger easy to service, clean, and maintain. Consequently, uptime can be considerably increased.

The 14-head scale and bagger were installed at the Murdock, NE facility in early January 2011. Wohlers reports, “Oxbow staff took

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approximately 14 hours to install the equipment, at which time the WeighPack technicians came in and installed some upgrades and started the training process. The WeighPack techs were here for two days and checked in on the third day to ensure there were no equipment problems or further training needs."

**EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY GAINS**

Oxbow has realized some significant efficiency advantages with the new weigh/fill/bagging system. Wohlers says, "The weighing speeds are about the same as with our previous scale system, but the wider range of bag sizes we can run now is a strong plus for us, and the weighing is very accurate. With this system, we have good leeway to add new bag sizes, if we want to."


In terms of easy maintenance and reduced downtime, disassembly of the Primo scale for thorough cleaning is very simple. And the remote on-line support and mobile-phone calibrating and trouble-shooting features also have been a boon. Wohlers comments, "We used the remote



on-line support option three times within the first two months to help us through some issues. Two of these times were after regular business hours. The technician fixed the problem and took the time to explain what they did as further training for us. The rapid remote assistance services equate to a great production insurance policy." **PW**



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**REMOTE REMEDIES.** The weigher/bagger combo incorporates remote, on-line servicing, eliminating time-involved site visits.

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