

Ryan Instruments

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MARKET: Poultry distribution.

CUSTOMER: Foster Farms, Livingston, Calif., is a major poultry processor, distributing 520 million pounds of poultry annually.

PROBLEM: Because it delivers fresh poultry to a vast geographical area, Foster Farms wanted to extend the shelf-life of its products. Poultry is extremely temperature-sensitive, so the US Department of Agriculture mandates that it be stored and distributed at temperatures no higher than 40° F. At that temperature, fresh chicken has a shelf-life of about seven days. Foster Farms distributes its poultry throughout the western United States -- including Alaska and Hawaii -- so poultry delivered according to industry standards would have a shelf-life of five days. The company also seeks to produce a high quality product, yet must rely on contract carriers to maintain poultry quality during distribution.

APPLICATION: For the past eight years, Foster Farms has used Ryan time/temperature monitors (TTMs) to study distribution channels outside California. With strict temperature control and monitoring, the company can maintain the temperature of its chickens between 28°-30°F during distribution. As a result, the birds have a shelf-life of 10 to 12 days -- longer than the industry standard. "The only way to really reflect the shipping conditions that the product gets (on a truck) is to put a temperature monitor in one of the boxes," said Dr. David Theno, Director of Technical Services at Foster Farms.

BENEFIT: Ryan TTMs provide Foster Farms with the information to "make sure that distribution temperature profiles are maintained," Theno said. "They also provide us with another avenue of discussion about product quality and temperature control with our carriers and distributors."

CONCLUSION: Foster Farms is able to maintain the company's reputation for quality, and extend product shelf-life, despite long distribution distances. "We like to see the product handled between 28° and 30° Fahrenheit in order to preserve its freshness and shelf-life," Theno said. "If it's got our label on it, we're guaranteeing to the customer that it has the quality Foster Farms is known for."