

packaging digest

Strategic testing stops leaky litter cartons in their tracks

After receiving reports that its cartons of Cat's Pride cat litter were leaking product on store shelves, Oil-Dri Corp. employed multivariable testing methods to fine-tune a finicky production process, eliminating problems with insufficient sealing.



After glue is applied via a hot-melt unit attached to a cartoner, carton flaps are closed, and pressure is applied. Through testing, Oil-Dri determined running the machine too slow resulted in glue dripping down the flaps and losing its tackiness, hindering proper sealing.



Anne Marie Mohan, Senior Editor

It's an inescapable fact of the cat-lover's life that once in the litter box, cat litter does not often remain there. One particularly swift and hardy thrust of Fluffy's back leg, and the sand-like, scoopable grains inevitably find their way next to the box or across the room, to be tracked though the house. But, while cat litter consumers may be resigned to cleaning stray sprays of powder once the product has been poured from its original packaging, they do not appreciate lugging leaky cartons home from store shelves. Unfortunately, such was the case for consumers of Cat's Pride scoopable litter from Oil-Dri Corp., after the company changed its packaging from plastic jugs to paperboard cartons in the spring of '99.

Relative newcomers to the carton-sealing process, Oil-Dri found that while end-of-the-line tests indicated that filled cartons were sufficiently sealed before they were shipped to distributors nationwide, consumers' experiences told another tale. "We had consumers picking the cartons up off the store shelf and putting them down on the conveyor belt at the checkout counter, and having the litter leak all over the conveyor," relates Kelly McGrail, vice president of corporate communications for Oil-Dri. "It was