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The American Meat Institute (AMI) is the nation's oldest and largest meat and poultry trade association. AMI is dedicated to increasing the efficiency, profitability and safety of meat and poultry trade worldwide. We welcome your questions, comments and suggestions regarding our website and our company. Contact us via email: webmaster@meatami.com.

Ask the Expert

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:45:47 AM> Josee: Good morning!

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:45:53 AM> MODERATOR: Welcome to the American Meat Institute's Jul 10th chat. Our expert today is Huston Keith, President of Keymark Associates. Mr. Keith will lead a discussion on the marketing and science behind Case-Ready meats.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:48:22 AM> Josee: go ahead and make a statement, saying good morning, introducing yourself and your topic.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:57:18 AM> Huston Keith: Good morning everyone

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:57:50 AM> Huston Keith: Minor technical problem, but we're live now

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:57:58 AM> William R. Brennan: Good Morning, is this going to play over the speakers

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:58:58 AM> MODERATOR: Mr. Brennan, It's not designed to.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:59:10 AM> William R. Brennan: Thank you

Tue Jul 10, 2001 10:59:23 AM> Huston Keith: I'm here to answer questions about trends and issues in case ready meat

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:00:02 AM> Mike: Can you explain what "case-ready" means?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:00:02 AM> Huston Keith: Keymark Associates recently completed a market study on this

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:01:09 AM> Huston Keith: Packaged ready to display in the retail case

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:02:08 AM> Huston Keith: Some key results were highlighted in the introductory web page.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:02:36 AM> William R. Brennan: We are in the process of setting up a case ready room. What equipment recommendations would you make?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:02:57 AM> Huston Keith: Case ready is now 15% of the retail meat market

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:03:54 AM> Huston Keith: We're not equipment experts, but I can give you some general guidelines.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:04:53 AM> Huston Keith: Key variables to consider are

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:05:29 AM> Huston Keith: product mix, volume, customer proximity

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:06:40 AM> Huston Keith: If you anticipate high volume and limited mix

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:07:37 AM> Huston Keith: then a gas-flush tray sealer be better

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:08:06 AM> Huston Keith: You will also get improved shelf life

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:08:38 AM> Huston Keith: to serve more distant markets or produce to inventory

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:09:10 AM> Huston Keith: If you have a broad range, but lower volume

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:13:23 AM> MODERATOR: I'm sorry folks, we appear to be having some technical difficulties. Please bear with us.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:18:17 AM> Guest3: I'm back

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:18:42 AM> Guest3: Guest3 is Huston Keith

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:19:49 AM> Josee: Huston, tell us about some of the driving forces behind the case-ready movement?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:19:56 AM> Guest3: Back to lower volume

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:20:44 AM> Guest3: To finish Mr. Brennan's question

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:21:08 AM> Guest3: Perhaps a wrapping machine

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:21:52 AM> Guest3: Coupled with a masterpack gas-flush machine

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:22:25 AM> Guest3: The tray sealer is more automated & faster

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:35:55 AM> Huston C Keith: While the overwrap can changever

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:36:10 AM> Huston C Keith: almost on the fly

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:36:33 AM> Huston C Keith: Sorry for the interruption

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:36:52 AM> Huston C Keith: Computer crashed

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:37:51 AM> Huston C Keith: What was your question, Josee?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:38:11 AM> Josee: Tell us about some of the driving forces behind the case-ready movement.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:39:18 AM> Huston C Keith: Several things, but the biggest are keeping meat in the case and food safety

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:39:49 AM> Josee: how does labor shortages factor into the equation?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:40:21 AM> Huston C Keith: Retailers are having increasing difficulty getting enough trained meatcutters to keep display cases filled

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:40:59 AM> Huston C Keith: Of course that means lost sales, dissatisfied shoppers, etc.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:42:17 AM> Huston C Keith: Often they are more willing to pay for case ready to make sure they have everything they need days, nights and weekends.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:42:17 AM> Josee: shifting gears, let's talk about consumers. what kind of packaging do consumers respond best to?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:43:13 AM> Huston C Keith: Consumers certainly like the existing packaging, overwrapped foam trays

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:44:06 AM> Huston C Keith: Despite being leaky. It also doesn't offer any shelf life

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:45:27 AM> Huston C Keith: Many consumers prefer the new sealed trays in MAP because they are leakproof

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:46:00 AM> Huston C Keith: Some object to the headspace, thinking it's over packaged

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:46:36 AM> Huston C Keith: The overriding factor is seeing bright red meat

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:47:00 AM> Huston C Keith: That means fresh to consumers.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:48:25 AM> Huston C Keith: Several retailers have been successful with both types of packaging

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:49:39 AM> Huston C Keith: The sealed trays have longer shelf life, but that's a processor/retailer concern, not the consumers

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:50:49 AM> Huston C Keith: It's almost noon, but I'll be happy to continue answering questions

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:53:11 AM> Huston C Keith: Another major factor is the potential for reducing cost at retail

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:54:03 AM> Huston C Keith: While many retailers have reduced shrink, labor & other costs

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:54:49 AM> Huston C Keith: Others have not seen the desired results yet

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:55:43 AM> Huston C Keith: It could be that they are not fully capturing cost of packing meat in-store

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:56:28 AM> MODERATOR: //Exclaim Please note, this chat will end in 5 minutes

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:57:05 AM> Huston C Keith: Or it could be that short of a full case-ready

program, too many backroom costs remain in the system

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:57:49 AM> Huston C Keith: A few years ago, labor resisted case ready very strongly

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:58:40 AM> Huston C Keith: but that's less true now because people have more job opportunities

Tue Jul 10, 2001 11:59:44 AM> Huston C Keith: Retailers are also being more progressive about not laying off workers, shifting them to other stores/responsibilities instead.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:00:08 PM> Huston C Keith: Good morning Tom

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:00:20 PM> Huston C Keith: Any questions?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:01:09 PM> Tom Van Doorn: Good afternoon, your time...looks like an interesting chat so far, although I can't see the conversation beyond "...both types of packaging..."

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:01:48 PM> Huston C Keith: There are a lot of processors and retailers in case ready than ever before

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:02:15 PM> MODERATOR: //Exclaim This chat is now over. Thank you all for your participation.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:02:19 PM> Tom Van Doorn: Yes, we are pondering the future of MAP in terms of package appearance, function, expectations...

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:02:46 PM> Huston C Keith: Nearly all retailers carry some case-ready products.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:03:34 PM> Tom Van Doorn: Houston, we can carry this on via email & the phone; again, let me know how I may be of service!

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:03:49 PM> Huston C Keith: Leave it to you to ask the hard questions.

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:05:01 PM> Tom Van Doorn: Well, we, as system suppliers, need to be there with the right equipment in anticipation of needs!

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:06:42 PM> Huston C Keith: Who still here? It's not showing up on my screen?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:07:26 PM> Tom Van Doorn: Tom's still on line, 'til you kick me out!

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:08:14 PM> MODERATOR: It's just the three of us...

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:08:32 PM> Huston C Keith: Tom, just before you logged in we were discussing how consumers like both the traditional package & MA packages

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:09:16 PM> MODERATOR: I need to shut the chat room down. Can we take this offline?

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:09:33 PM> Huston C Keith: MA packages have too much headspace but don't leak. The reverse is true for traditional

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:09:40 PM> Huston C Keith: OK

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:11:09 PM> Tom Van Doorn: Any feel for the validity of customers preferring overwrap to the point of not buying the product if in a lidded tray?!

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:11:50 PM> Tom Van Doorn: Thank you, Mr. Moderator!

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:12:17 PM> Tom Van Doorn: enjoyed the chat!

Tue Jul 10, 2001 12:12:48 PM> MODERATOR: Thank You!