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Serious Fire Hazard Made Safe by Pelletizing

Pensacola Port Hopeful of 20-30,000 Tons of Fishmeal Shipments--'68

By SUZANNE BALL
News-Journal Staff Writer

SIX months ago, a bulk lot of 400 tons of fish meal was loaded into the hold of a Peruvian vessel bound for Pensacola as part of a critical test to determine if heat problems caused by spontaneous combustion in these type shipments could be overcome.

Two weeks later, "The Putumayo" arrived without incident at the Port of Pensacola where newly processed pellets of fish meal were discharged by clamshell cranes onto conveyor belts and into the warehouse.

A second successful shipment in December was adequate proof that a recent discovery of a pelletizing process treated with additives would eliminate serious hazards of combustion that making meal safe for transportation in bulk form.

Peruvian fish meal is a prime ingredient in poultry feed formulas in the U. S. and heretofore was shipped in bags because it was a constant fire hazard. However, no warehouse fires caused by fish meal have broken out at the Pensacola port because precautions are constantly taken to insure maximum safety.

"But Peruvian anchovies, finger length and fresh from the sea, can be almost as flammable as gun powder once they are processed into meal," said Jack Busby, assistant vice president and head of the fish meal department of Cargill, Inc., a major producer of Peruvian fish meal.

"The reason is that the meal contains a high level of fat as well as protein, minerals and vitamins, which create heat and ignite when it oxidizes," he said.

"Oxidized fish meal, although it did not always burst into flame, suffered from deterioration of nutrients, making unpredictable the most efficient formulation of poultry feeds. Furthermore, it required higher insurance rates as well as the extra cost of handling and shipping in bags."

"Now, due to the breakthrough in the new process, meal can be shipped and unloaded in bulk rather than in expensive bags—a step which will eventually save up to \$10 per ton and also will provide for a 20 per cent more efficient use of hold space aboard ship."

"The Peruvian Times," a Lima newspaper, explained that there is probably no other high quality protein feed stuff as subject to quality loss during storage as fish meal. Oxidation in fish meal causes extensive chemical changes and greatly reduces the nutritional value of fish meal often before it is consumed.

"The ability to treat, pelletize and ship meal in bulk means that we can now supply poultry producers with a higher quality feed ingredient," the Cargill executive said. "This will make Peruvian meal more competitive with other fish meal producing countries and competing sources of protein in expanding world markets."

The search for a stabilized meal that would improve feeding quality as well as cut production costs was begun in late 1965 by Pousqua Delin, Cargill's Peruvian subsidiary. Work was begun with Monsanto Company of St. Louis to test antioxidant chemicals.

When the first bulk lot was

loaded onto the "Putumayo," thermometers were placed throughout the 400-ton load so that changes in temperature could be recorded minute by minute. Heat sensors in the test cargoes indicated normal temperatures during the entire trip to Pensacola.

THE Peruvian newspaper reported that a homogenized product of fat and moisture

content is the essential element in the pelletizing process when the fish meal leaves the dryer. At this point, antioxidant in either liquid or powder form is added to the meal. Formerly,

the spontaneous combustion phenomenon began immediately after drying, raising the temperature above 100 degrees C.

According to Richard Hale, the newly appointed Pensacola port director, Cargill, Inc. plans to ship 10,000 tons of pelleted Peruvian fish meal to the U. S. annually with expansion of distribution to all major poultry production areas in the country.

"Pensacola is the only port in the country currently receiving pelleted meal in bulk form," he said. "The last shipment received in Pensacola was Feb. 29 carrying a cargo of 3,000 tons."

Another vessel loaded with 2,000 tons is expected here at the end of April. "Hopefully, from 20,000-30,000 tons of the meal will be shipped here this year," Hale said.



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