

Pet Food Company Takes Pain Out Of Processing with Gorbels

Moving large slabs of frozen meat was becoming a major issue for a leading manufacturer of pet food. “We were having several lost time injuries per year, not to mention the other cases of back and pinch pains and fatigue,” said the company’s Safety & Training Coordinator. “If you get one lost time accident, obviously that’s too many because the first thing you think of is workers being safe. Just one injury can also cost the company an awful lot of money long term.”

The application of concern was in the food processing area of the plant where pallets of frozen meat are brought in from a cooler. The meat is lifted from a pallet to a table and pushed into a conveyor where it goes on to be shredded. Each slab of meat weighs about 45 pounds, and measures roughly 2’ wide, 3’ long and about 4” thick. Workers were lifting each piece manually, having to lift and twist then push the frozen meat dozens of times in an 8-hour shift. Injuries and fatigue became a major problem, and the company decided to seek a more ergonomic method of moving the meat.

The solution came in the form of a Gorbels ceiling mounted work station crane with a vacuum lifter. The system features 22’ trussed runways and a 19’ bridge with 250 pound capacity, which covers the entire area where meat is dropped off and loaded onto the conveyor. A vacuum lifter with a skirt attachment allows workers to pick each piece and move it to the conveyor.

According to the Safety and Training Coordinator, results were easy to see right away. “At first, workers thought they would be able to move faster lifting by hand. They realized pretty quickly that with the help of the Gorbels work station crane, they were able to work fast without getting tired and slowing down midway through their shift like they would by lifting manually.”

The primary objective was reducing injuries, and that was clearly achieved. “The crane was installed in 2001, and since then injuries are not a problem with that application.”

Since the original installation, the company has been able to change their process and modify the crane along with it. “Our processes change to increase productivity, but now we’re able to achieve productivity goals without wearing our people out.”

