

Feed Plant Solves Wear and Breakage Problems With Maxi-Lift® Urethane Elevator Buckets

When Mark Pate, Maintenance Manager for Prestage Farms got into a jam, he called one of his associates at a neighboring mill for help. Mark needed elevator buckets in a big hurry, and was fortunate enough to find a friend who had buckets to offer. Little did he know that favor would change the way he equipped his elevators forever.

“I didn’t realize he had sent me anything out of the ordinary until I went to pay the bill, then I knew I didn’t get a standard plastic bucket,” said Pate. His counterpart had sent him urethane buckets instead of polyethylene to put in as replacements and that was the turning point.

Prestage Farms has four feed mills supplying feeds for their livestock farms throughout the southeast. They are one of the top five swine producers in the United States. Combine that with their large turkey farms, and you have an instant feed market. The Clinton, North Carolina mill produces 19,000 tons of feed weekly. The nine elevators at this facility handle a wide variety of raw materials and finished goods, so bucket life is critical.

The truck receiving elevator takes the most wear and tear, because it moves everything that is received in the plant. “We move bone, meat, and blood meal, whole grains like corn, rice and wheat, and minerals like limestone and phos-

phate,” said Pate. The minerals weigh as much as 85 pounds per cubic foot, causing additional stress. The standard “cc” style polyethylene buckets in this elevator were cracking and shattering. As one bucket would break off into the leg, it would tear off a number of other buckets causing even more damage. The result was lots of little pieces of blue polyethylene in the raw materials.

Pate had never used urethane in his elevators until he bought those emergency replacements. “We were replacing an entire elevators worth of the polyethylene buckets about every 18 months. We never really wore them out, they were just breaking on us.” The replacement urethane buckets on the other hand, held up to the abuse without breaking. This durable performance made the decision easy to make. Pate would buy urethane buckets for Prestage Farms.

After several years of constant operation, the urethane buckets are still performing flawlessly. “I can’t even measure the wear on the Maxi-Lift urethane buckets because it is so minimal.” Pate commented. The urethane buckets have also solved the breakage problems Prestage experienced with the “cc” poly buckets. The urethane buckets actually last too long in some cases. “I won’t put them in my pellet legs because they last too long. My belting is only good for about five years, and the urethane lasts well beyond that. I don’t want to have to invest the labor in pulling them off of the



Prestage Farms is one of the top five swine producers in the United States and has four feed mills supplying livestock farms throughout the Southeast.

old belt and installing them on the new one.” Prestage Farms uses Maxi-Lift standard duty polyethylene buckets on these elevators.

Urethane buckets are the most abrasion resistant non-metallic buckets available. They have the added benefit of being pliable, which allows them to give a little under impact. This virtually eliminates the cracking experienced with some polyethylene buckets, making them ideal for feed applications.

“We have some new elevators that came with polyethylene buckets as original equipment. We will replace those with the Maxi-Lift urethane elevator buckets, too,” said Pate.

Maxi-Lift, Inc. makes 40 sizes of agricultural urethane buckets.

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