

Welcome to Leather Update.....

Sept 2009

As we reach the middle of the year, this issue of Update brings you information on how enzymes are the sustainable choice, illegal deforestation in Brazil, new hide prices, all you need to know about CPSIA, BLC Sure family of leathermarks, and new leather courses at BLC coming up in September and October.



Enzymes—The Sustainable Choice

The process of converting hides and skins into leather involves a sequence of complex chemical reactions and mechanical processes. Although the leather industry is environmentally important as a user of a byproduct, it is perceived as a consumer of resources and a producer of pollutants. In order to reach the a position of sustainability, the industry must aim to reduce the consumption of chemical water and energy resources.

With the ever increasing emphasis on cleaner production, sustainable processing and greener materials, the application of enzymes to both replace and enhance chemical systems has never been more relevant. Enzyme systems that can minimise the effluent burden and replace chemicals which have a undesirable environmental profile will become of increasing interest. In an environment where brands and retailers are keen to demonstrate good environmental credentials, material selection based on green criteria will become even more important.

Enzymes have an important role in leather manufacture and the use of biocatalysts is now considered to be state-of-the-art for the processing of animals skins and hides.

The most important enzyme types for leather processing are proteases and lipases, which are active against protein and fat components of the skin respectively. Currently proteases are used extensively for the soaking, liming and bating operations and lipase formulations are commercially available to assist with the dispersion of natural fat within the skin substrate.

Whilst there are a number of factors to take into consideration when handling and using enzymes, if used appropriately their benefits far outweigh any sensitivities associated with their use and often the results achieved are not possible with simple chemical systems. This is particularly relevant with properties such as softness, area yield and uniformity of resulting leather.

One area of particular value in terms of environmental improvement is in the unhairing process. Enzymes have been used successfully to aid unhairing either as a pre-treatment in the soaking process or as an addition or pre-cursor to the liming process. When used effectively, enzymes can both speed up the process and reduce the amount to chemicals used with the resulting hides often being cleaner. Enzymology and green chemistry will continue to play a major part in the evolution of the leather making process, ensuring cleaner processing and the production of greener materials.

Check out our International Training Courses 2009...



Boston USA -15th Sept



Hong Kong—23rd Sept



London—1st Oct

CHEMICAL SUBSTANCE - FACT SHEET

All you need to know about

CPSIA lead regulations

Frequently asked questions:

What is Lead and why is it regulated?

- Lead is a main group element; with the chemical symbol Pb. Lead has a soft malleable appearance, and although it is a post-transition metal, it is considered a 'heavy metal'. Lead is a highly stable element and because of this property, it is a potent neurotoxin, which accumulates in the soft tissues and bone over time and can damage the nervous system, and delay mental and physical development and bone over time and can damage the nervous system, and delay mental and physical development. Infants and young children are particularly susceptible to lead poisoning and a nurturing child absorbs up to 50% more lead. As a result, lead content in children's products is regulated by the Consumer Safety Product Act (CPSIA) in the US.

What is the current legislation?

- The CPSIA legislation provides limits to the amount of lead in paint and surface coatings, and limits to the amount of lead in the content of all products intended for use by children under the age of 12, that are to be manufactured, imported or distributed for sale in the United States.

- Section CPSC 16 CFR 1303 of the Act applies directly to the lead content in paint and surface coating materials and specifies that the lead content should not be in excess of 0.06% of the weight of the total non-volatile content of the paint.

- Before shipping any products to be imported for consumption or warehousing or distribution in commerce in the United States, the products must have the required certifications, stating that they comply with the lead limits.

Testing can be carried out by any laboratory with third party accreditation for the procedure, such as BLC Leather Technology Centre.

What is the definition of paint and surface coating?

This is defined as a fluid, semi-fluid, or other material, with or without a suspension of finely divided colouring matter, which changes to a solid film when a thin layer is applied to a metal, wood, stone, paper, leather, cloth, plastic, or other surface.

What are the requirements?

- The requirements are that the lead content should not be in excess of 0.06% of the weight of the total non-volatile content of the paint. This equates to no more than 600ppm of lead in any component of the sample.

In August 2009, this requirement will be reduced to 300ppm, and will eventually be reduced to no more than 90ppm of lead.

What needs to be tested and are there any exclusions?

- All children's products that are painted, or have surface coatings are currently subject to the lead paint limit and each component of these products must be tested separately. If the product is to be coated in a number of different colour paints, each different colour must be scraped off and tested individually.

- If the children's product uses printing inks or materials which actually become a part of the substrate, such as the pigment in a plastic article, or those materials which are actually bonded to the substrate, such as by electroplating or ceramic glazing, they would be excluded from the lead paint limit. However, these products would not be considered as lead free, and would require total lead content testing.

All products will eventually require testing for lead, not just those with surface coatings e.g. plastic hula hoops.

What test method is used?

- The Consumer Product Safety Commission specifies a number of methods, which involve removing the surface coating, digesting to release the pigment and analysis by Inductively Coupled Plasma techniques. BLC is able to carry out this testing, as it is a third party accredited laboratory.

The Standard Consumer Safety Specification for Toy Safety specifies a method for total lead content. The CPSC have yet to develop other testing methodologies to use for total lead content testing, however a reasonable testing protocol is required.

How do I obtain a certificate?

- The certificate of compliance must be based on the results of third party testing, but is not issued by the laboratory itself. The general conformity certification must be based on a test of each product or a reasonable testing programme.

- Certification must be provided by the importer for products manufactured outside of the US. For products produced domestically, the certificate must be issued by the US manufacturer. Neither a foreign manufacturer nor a private labeller is required to issue a certificate.

The certificate must accompany each product or shipment of products covered by the same certificate. A copy of the certificate (not necessarily a paper copy) must be furnished to each distributor or retailer of the product.

What must I include in the certificate?

The certificate must specify, in English:

- The name, address and phone number of the manufacturer or private labeller issuing the certificate and any third party on whose testing the certificate depends.

- The date and place where the product was manufactured, and the date and place where it was tested.

- Contact information for the person maintaining testing records.

- Each applicable standard included for the product.

Any other information that is applicable.



What happens if I fail to certify?

The product shall be refused admission to the United States if it is not accompanied by the required certificate or if it is accompanied by a false certificate. Under these circumstances, the product may be destroyed at the cost of the importer.

How can BLC help?

BLC has CPSC approval as an accredited laboratory for the 16CFR1303 lead testing standard and is one of a limited number of UK laboratories to offer lead testing to the US market.

For information and advice on testing of lead and other metals and restricted substances contact info@blcleathertech.com or +44 (0) 1604 679999.

BLC Training dates.....

an opportunity not to be missed

Training Courses

15th Sept— 1 Day Understanding Leather—Boston, USA
23rd Sept— 1 Day Understanding Leather—Hong Kong
1st Oct— 1 Day Understanding Leather—London

Perfect for those new to the leather industry and also for designers, buyers and retailers of leather products, this course offers an ideal grounding of information and knowledge on leather as a material.

24th Sept— Half Day Mould in Leather—Hong Kong

This workshop will give an understanding of mould causes, how the problem can be prevented and when it occurs. All areas of the leather supply chain can benefit from attending.

24th Sept— Half Day How Safe is my Leather? - Hong Kong

This course explores different types of fungicides and allergens; how to manage risk effectively, prevent claims and ensure customer safety; how to avoid brand damage; how to implement RSL policies and strategies. Ideal for customer services, retail staff, technicians, buyers and QA personnel.

6th—7th Oct— 2 Day Comprehensive Leather—BLC UK

Aimed at leather users and retailers, this course is suitable for all product sectors. In addition to how leather is made, content includes vital information on testing and specifications, restricted substances, labeling, design and construction problems and much more, with ample opportunity for discussion and debate.



Practical Leather Making Training

5 Day Intensive Leather Technology Training
16—20th November.

For more information contact Tracey Faulkner
+44 (0) 1604 679967 or visit www.blcleathertech.com

Deforestation in Brazil for Cattle Farming

In the last few months, Greenpeace and other environmental agencies have become increasingly concerned by the effect of cattle farming in the Brazilian regions. The growing number of cattle farms is having a detrimental effect on the environment, not only causing deforestation of the Amazon rainforests, but also the release of concerning amounts of greenhouse gas emissions. Cattle farming has since become the largest cause of deforestation in the Amazon.

In response to the growing concerns in this area, Greenpeace, alongside organisations such as Amazonia, the NWF, and the IMAZON coordinated a workshop to discuss solutions to combat this growing problem.

Members of the workshop unanimously agreed that deforestation must be stopped immediately to avoid irreversible damage to the environment. IMAZON pointed out that drastic action will be necessary if we don't act now, especially as Brazilian cattle farms account for 44% of greenhouse gas emissions released every day.

Greenpeace recently published a report which named companies who openly source cattle from areas suffering from deforestation. Named in the report was Bertin, the world's largest leather exporter, who has recently pledged to fight against such farming by backing the call for a moratorium on buying cattle from farms responsible for Amazon deforestation. Many members at the working group expressed the importance of a traceability system enabling buyers to be aware of where goods are sourced, to certify that they are not sourced from farms who are linked to slavery or conflict or farms who directly affect deforestation of the Amazon.

Should a traceability system be enforced, the Brazilian cattle farming market will be sure to become the most legitimate it can be. The system can help to eliminate worries and concerns about Amazon rainforests and gas emissions, and could also potentially increase the quality of both meat and hides from these regions.

Coming up next time.

All you need to know about Flammability Testing



Disclaimer BLC Leather Technology Centre Ltd has made all reasonable efforts to ensure the accuracy of the information provided. However, the information should not be relied upon as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice. Due care and attention should be exercised when using this information.

BLC Leather Technology Centre Limited Leather Trade House, Kings Park Road, Moulton Park, Northampton, NN3 6JD, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 1604 679999 Fax: +44 (0) 1604 679998 Email: info@blcleathertech.com

www.blcleathertech.com

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For further information on the
SURE FAMILY OF LEATHERMARKS
and how to use them
contact Lindsay Sultana +44 (0) 1604 679948
Or visit www.blcleathertech.com