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Equestrian articles at a gallop: AutoStore system from AM- Automation boosts process efficiency at Agravis Raiffeisen AG

200 percent more performance, reduced error rate and relief at the workplace: with AutoStore, AM-Automation GmbH implemented a future-proof system for the logistics of small parts for Agravis Raiffeisen AG in a very short time.

“With classic warehousing, it was becoming increasingly difficult to meet the growing demands on our small parts logistics, even from an economic point of view,” says Andre Damkowski, Logistics Consultant at the Agravis distribution center in Münster. As a wholesaler, Agravis supplies around 1,000 Raiffeisen stores in large parts of Germany from Münster, with products ranging from animal feed and fertilizers to equestrian supplies, gardening articles, household supplies and hardware.

In addition, the products are also available from the online store raiffeisenmarkt.de, with a selection of around 13,000 items of various types and sizes. Until now, the individual items had to be manually removed from a three-level shelf system and a Colli flow rack, transported to the packing table by picking trolley and prepared for dispatch. However, the respective routes including goods removal and transfer were taking up more and more time, and incorrectly assigned articles were causing complaints.

Easily scalable and highly efficient

The search for an alternative and future-proof logistics solution led Agravis to the AutoStore concept and thus to AM-Automation, the leading

AutoStore integrator in Germany with more than 80 installed systems:

“As an easily scalable, highly automated and compact system, AutoStore is ideally suited to meet Agravis’ requirements in every respect,” states Maik Weinheimer as the responsible project manager at AM-Automation.

Modular in design, the AutoStore concept is based on small parts storage in standardized plastic boxes that are stacked within an aluminum structure divided into grids. The goods, which are sorted into the boxes called “bins” and scanned, are managed autonomously by the AutoStore software and brought to the top of the structure called “grid” on demand. There, highly mobile robots receive the bins and ensure that the order-specific retrieved items are forwarded to the respective desired picking workstation. Instead of manually removing individual parts from shelves and moving them from one workstation to the next, the goods land directly at the packing table without any detours.

Automation triples output

Following preparatory planning at the end of 2019, AM-Automation was commissioned by Agravis last February to implement the AutoStore solution, and five months later the new system went into operation at the end of July. Despite the Corona circumstances, the actual installation and technical

commissioning took less than eight weeks, without having to interrupt ongoing operations at the Agravis distribution center. On a floor area of 650 sqm, the AutoStore solution implemented for Agravis provides space for a total of 24,150 bins with an external height of 330 mm each, corresponding to a packing volume of 75 liters per box. Ten robots are used on the grid to remove the bins, while order picking takes place at four workstations (“ports”) at the base of the system.

Agravis logistics specialist Damkowksi believes that the original requirements for a more economical solution for small parts logistics have been met in full: “Since we sometimes have relatively time-intensive packing processes at the ports, we have planned here for a picking and packing capacity of around 80 items per hour and workstation. Compared to the previous, two-stage and manual

this means a process, this means an increase in performance of more than 200 percent.” Last but not least, the changeover to AutoStore also ensures relaxation at the workplace: staff are considerably relieved of manual transport processes, and the order-specific provision of items prevents assignment errors during packing.

