



Not Too Many Places with a Sign Like This!

Moose & Mousse

Ducks, deer, turtles, kangaroos, manatees, crocodiles, camels, low flying geese and killer rabbits all have warning signs posted somewhere around the globe. However, the most majestic must be the magnificent moose. I didn't come across one on the road, thankfully, but they must be an incredible sight up close. And they must be quite common judging by the miles of fencing along the major highways to keep them back in the woods. The locals tell me that they are not aggressive in the same way that

big game might be in Africa but that they are so big and so slow that hitting one is like literally hitting a wall. Moose season is mercifully short as I don't think they are too hard to find but killing one with your car or truck doesn't count so you can't keep the meat. It's a shame – you'd think it would be the least the cops could do for you after wrecking your car. By the way, just in case you didn't know, a group of moose is called a fangle (or a herd).

Molders are few and far between in New Brunswick. And for good reason –



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everything is so spread out it takes the proverbial three-day caribou hike to reach them. Having said that, they have some good size operations and supply the local agriculture and fishing industries well. The language is often French, or at least a version of it. They say that their form of original Cajun is more pure than modern French, untainted as it is by the last two hundred years of European or American influence. Modern French speakers from other lands may disagree but they can at least communicate and I could pick up a

word or three as they chatted.

Which brings me to my second encounter with mousse (which is French for foam). Polyethylene foaming to be precise, or in the case of most rotomolders, imprecise. It is still mystifying how many molders attempt to produce consistent multi-layer foam parts without temperature control inside the mold. It is difficult enough to produce multi-layer parts which have solid layers and ensure that proper timing and cure has been achieved for each layer. In the case of foam, there are even more variables to consider in terms of controlling the start and end of a chemical reaction which adds heat and creates instability in your material. Foaming in rotomolding is a well-practiced art by a few and a broadly tried failure for many. Whether it is economics, cycle settings, design or simply the hassle factor of running it in production, using drop-boxes, availability of foaming agents, etc. many molders give up too quickly and/or don't have a large enough production demand to justify sticking with it.

If you want a good mousse you will need to understand fundamental material properties, set up good process control,

design the cross-section and overall part correctly, choose the right equipment and train everyone so that they understand exactly what is happening in-cycle. Basically, ask for help on this one or be prepared to spend a lot of R&D re-inventing the proverbial wheel.

Good Suppliers, Bad Customers, Good Customers, Bad Suppliers

Where do you fit on this continuum? You most likely fit into it twice as almost all companies fit into both sides of the equation – you have to buy stuff to sell stuff (mostly). A good supplier should be consistent, fair, reliable and responsive. A good customer should be consistent, fair, reliable and responsive. In the swings and roundabouts of the marketplace, there are times when you can ignore these guidelines when multiple options are available; but at your peril. My recent interactions with suppliers and customers show how memories can be long when things become tight on either end of the supply chain. Thought for today: remember the future. **R**

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