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Lactose Fouling of Ion Exchange Technology

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the Masterate of Technology
In Bioprocess Engineering at
Massey University.

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1999

ABSTRACT

Cheese whey is an ingredient used in infant formulae manufacture. Before addition, the cheese whey is fully demineralised using Ion Exchange (IE) technology. Investigation of the IE process revealed low lactose yields. The objective of this thesis was to provide an understanding of the mechanism causing these low yields. This understanding may be used to improve these yields during IE processing.

Two mechanisms were proposed for the removal of lactose during IE processing namely resin entrapment and lactose mutarotation adsorption. Investigations of the mechanisms were performed with both continuous and batch benchtop methods. Whey, lactose and DMSO/lactose feed solutions were employed with various resins. DMSO/lactose solution experiments were inconclusive in determining the mechanism. Whey and lactose trials revealed lactose adsorption occurred predominantly onto the macroporous anion resin (0.09 g-lactose/g resin) compared with the gel cation resin (0.04 g-lactose/g resin). In comparison the maximum lactose adsorption onto an alternative gel structured anion resin was shown to be 0.05 g-lactose/g resin. Adsorption isotherm results were dependent on the supernatant concentration. The majority of lactose adsorbed onto both the macroporous and gel anion resins was recovered with six and three equivalent volumes of water, respectively.

The adsorption dependency on the resin structure and supernatant concentration coupled with the recovery of adsorbed lactose with water proved that the resin entrapment mechanism was causing the low lactose yields. In hindsight the DMSO results were also consistent with the resin entrapment mechanism causing the low lactose yields.

It is recommended that to reduce lactose losses during IE processing by 43%, gel structured anion resin (A847S) should be coupled in series with the existing gel structured cation resin (C100H). The gel anion resin would also halve the anion water requirements during lactose recovery flushing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Tony Paterson for his help and guidance throughout this project. Without him this Masterate would never have been completed. Thanks to the senior management at Waitoa for supporting this work. Additional thanks to Mike Howell for helping order laboratory equipment.

Thank you to Rob Boswell and Paul Signal from the Hautapu Protein Development group for their contributions in accessing the suitable laboratory equipment.

A big thanks to Tania Williams and the other Waitoa Laboratory Chemistry staff especially Mayson, Nick, Dick, Mary, and Carmel for helping me with the laboratory work. A special thanks also to Mayson and Nick for providing test methods for the most unusual analyses I could think of.

A collectively thanks to the Waitoa operators of the Ion Exchange plant for they time they provide me to discuss the Ion Exchange process and related issues.

A special thanks to Trevor Bell for helping me prioritise my workload properly and to Trevor and the other Engineering staff for helping me whenever I have general questions.

Special thanks to all those who put up or shared a beer with me during the stressed times.

Finally thanks to my family and my best friend, Shell (but don't tell Colleen), for their support to allow me to get to the position to undertake this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF EQUATIONS	xi
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	xii
1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	2
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	2
2.2 IE THEORY.....	4
2.3 IE ORIGINS.....	4
2.4 IE RESINS.....	5
2.4.1 CATION RESIN.....	5
2.4.2 ANION RESIN	6
2.4.3 IE RESIN STRUCTURE.....	7
2.4.3.1 Chain Entanglement.....	7
2.4.3.2 Differential Polymerisation.....	8
2.4.3.3 Non-Fouling Resins.....	10
2.4.3.3.1 Macroporous.....	10
2.4.3.3.2 Isoporous	10
2.5 MECHANISMS OF IE.....	11
2.6 ION SELECTIVITY	13
2.7 IE WHEY DEMINERALISATION PROCESS.....	13
2.7.1 PROCESS REACTORS.....	13

Lactose Fouling of Ion Exchange Technology

2.7.2	EXCHANGE ZONE.....	14.....
2.7.3	PROCESS OPERATION.....	15.....
2.7.3.1	Service.....	16.....
2.7.3.2	Back-washing.....	19.....
2.7.3.3	Regeneration.....	20.....
2.7.3.3.1	SMR Process.....	21.....
2.7.3.3.2	Thermal Regeneration.....	21.....
2.7.3.4	Rinse.....	22.....
2.8	PROCESSING VARIABLES.....	22.....
2.8.1	COLUMN LENGTH.....	22.....
2.8.2	FLUID VELOCITY.....	23.....
2.8.3	TEMPERATURE.....	23.....
2.8.4	CONCENTRATION.....	24.....
2.9	PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH IE.....	25.....
2.9.1	DISCONTINUOUS NATURE.....	25.....
2.9.2	REGENERANT USAGE.....	25.....
2.9.3	WATER REQUIREMENTS.....	25.....
2.9.4	EFFLUENT PRODUCTION.....	26.....
2.9.5	FOULING.....	26.....
2.9.5.1	Lactose Fouling.....	27.....
2.9.5.1.1	Lactose Chemistry.....	27.....
2.9.5.2	Whey Protein Chemistry.....	34.....
2.9.5.2.1	Whey Protein Fouling.....	35.....
2.9.5.3	Minimising Lactose and Protein Losses.....	36.....
2.10	IE FOULING HYPOTHESIS.....	37.....
3.0	MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	38
3.1	MATERIALS.....	38.....
3.1.1	RESIN.....	38.....
3.1.1.1	Resin Regeneration.....	38.....
3.1.1.2	DMSO Moisture Trial Resin Preparation.....	39.....
3.1.2	FEED SOLUTIONS.....	39.....
3.1.2.1	NF Whey.....	39.....

Lactose Fouling of Ion Exchange Technology

3.1.2.2	Lactose.....	40.....
3.1.2.2.1	Acidified Lactose.....	40.....
3.1.2.2.2	DMSO/Lactose Solutions.....	41.....
3.2	EXPERIMENTAL METHODS.....	41.....
3.2.1	CONTINUOUS METHODS.....	41.....
3.2.2	BATCH METHODS.....	43.....
3.2.2.1	Batch DMSO Moisture Trials.....	43.....
3.2.2.2	Batch Lactose Recovery Trials.....	43.....
3.3	TEST METHODS.....	44.....
3.3.1	CONDUCTIVITY.....	44.....
3.3.2	REFRACTIVE INDEX.....	44.....
3.3.3	pH.....	44.....
3.3.4	FLOWRATE.....	44.....
3.3.5	WEIGHT.....	44.....
3.3.6	LABORATORY METHODS.....	45.....
3.3.6.1	DMSO Total Solids Analyses.....	45.....
3.3.6.2	DMSO Moisture Analyses.....	46.....
4.0	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	47
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	47.....
4.2	CONTINUOUS TRIALS.....	47.....
4.2.1	CATION AND ANION COLUMNS.....	47.....
4.2.2	MODIFIED COLUMN EXPERIMENTAL METHODS.....	48.....
4.2.3	LACTOSE ADSORPTION OCCURRENCE.....	50.....
4.3	TS MEASUREMENT.....	53.....
4.4	DMSO BATCH TRIALS.....	54.....
4.4.1	DMSO LACTOSE ADSORPTION TRIALS.....	54.....
4.4.2	BATCH OVEN DRIED DMSO TRIALS.....	56.....
4.4.3	DMSO MOISTURE EVOLUTION TRIAL.....	56.....
4.5	AQUEOUS BATCH TRIALS.....	59.....
4.5.1	CONFIRMING BATCH METHODOLOGY.....	59.....

Lactose Fouling of Ion Exchange Technology

4.5.2	BATCH AQUEOUS ADSORPTION TRIALS.....	60..
4.5.3	VARIABLE SAMPLE SIZE ADSORPTION TRIAL WITH A103S.....	63
4.5.4	VARIABLE FEED CONCENTRATION ADSORPTION TRIALS.....	63
4.5.5	LACTOSE RECOVERY TRIALS FOR IRA95 AND A103S.....	65
4.5.6	VARIABLE SAMPLE SIZE LACTOSE RECOVERY TRIAL WITH A103S.....	67
4.5.7	A847S AND A845 LACTOSE RECOVERY TRIALS.....	68.
4.5.8	VARIABLE FEED CONCENTRATION RECOVERY TRIALS.....	71
5.0	CONCLUSIONS.....	73
6.0	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	76
7.0	REFERENCES.....	77

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Typical Cheddar Cheese Whey Composition (McElligott, 1990)	3
Table 2: Individual Whey Protein Data (Hodges, 1992).....	35
Table 3: Ion Exchange Resins.....	38
Table 4: NF Whey Composition for Trials 6, 7 and 8	40
Table 5: NF Whey Composition for Trial 11	40
Table 6: SNA Yields from Continuous Trials	48
Table 7: Refractive Index Regression Coefficients.....	53
Table 8: Maximum Lactose Adsorption.....	62
Table 9: Lactose Adsorption Calculations onto Selected Resins.....	63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Sulphonic Cation Resin Structure (Arden, 1968)	6
Figure 2: Weakly Basic (tertiary amine) Anion Exchange Resin (Arden, 1968)	6
Figure 3: Comparison of Standard Resin Types (Arden, 1968)	11
Figure 4: IE Process (Herve, 1974).....	14
Figure 5: Regeneration Zone (Ennis, 1984).	15
Figure 6: Process Steps (Ennis, 1984).....	16
Figure 7: IE Demineralisation of Cheddar Cheese Whey (Delaney and Donnelly, 1975). 17	
Figure 8: Permeate Demineralisation (Finer, 1993).....	19
Figure 9: IE Operating Temperature Protein Losses (Delaney, 1976).	24
Figure 10: Lactose Isomers (M ^c Murray ,1988).....	27
Figure 11: Open Chain Lactose (M ^c Murray ,1988)	28
Figure 12: Acid Catalysed Mutarotation	29
Figure 13: Alkali Catalysed Mutarotation	31
Figure 14: The Effect of pH on the Mutarotation Rate of Lactose (Lowe, 1993).....	33
Figure 15: Temperature Effect on the Mutarotation Rate of Lactose (Lowe, 1993).	34
Figure 16: Bench Top Setup	42
Figure 17: Percentage of SNA Remaining in Solution	51
Figure 18: Adjusted Lactose adsorption results for DMSO/lactose batch trials.....	55
Figure 19: 95% Confidence Interval for Moisture Evolution.....	58
Figure 20: Percentage of SNA Remaining in Solution	59
Figure 21: Lactose Adsorption for all resin types.....	61
Figure 22: Lactose Adsorption Isotherms for all resins	64
Figure 23: IRA95 Anion Lactose Recovery	66
Figure 24: A103S Anion Resin Lactose Recovery	67
Figure 25: A103S Fixed F:R Ratio Lactose Recovery.....	68
Figure 26: Lactose Recovery for A847S resin.....	69
Figure 27: Lactose Recovery for A845 resin.....	70
Figure 28: Lactose Recovery for all anion resins	71
Figure 29: Lactose Recovery for variable feed concentration samples.....	72

LIST OF EQUATIONS

Equation 2.1: Cation Exchange Mechanism.....	11
Equation 2.2: Anion Exchange Mechanism.....	11

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

IE	Ion Exchange – the whey demineralisation process investigated
COD	Chemical Oxygen Demand – a measure of effluent concentration
DVB	Divinyl Benzene – a monomer responsible for the crosslinking of the resin polymer matrix
BOD	Biological Oxygen Demand – a measure of effluent concentration
SNA	Solids Non Ash - Organic components remaining after evaporation of the solvent. Sample SNA calculated from the sample TS less the sample Ash (inorganic)
RO Water	Reverse Osmosis Water – water purified through a reverse osmosis plant
DMSO	Dimethyl Sulphoxide – a polar solvent used to inhibit mutarotation
NF Whey	Nanofiltered Whey – whey processed through a nanofiltration plant
F:R Ratio	Feed:Resin Ratio – the ratio of feed solution processed through a fixed resin volume size
TS	Total Solids – Organic and inorganic components remaining after evaporation of the solvent
BV	Bed Volume – a liquid volume equivalent to the volume occupied by the <u>immersed resin</u>

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Anchor Products Waitoa manufactures dairy powders for human infant consumption. These powders utilise demineralised cheddar cheese whey as an ingredient. The cheddar cheese whey is fully demineralised using Ion Exchange (IE) technology. The demineralised whey comprises predominantly lactose solids. Smaller quantities of whey proteins are also contained in the demineralised whey.

During investigation of the IE process it was noted that:

1. Lactose yields were low.
2. Effluent concentrations ($>3,000$ mg COD/L) were greater than literature recommendations (1700-2200 mg COD/L).
3. The pH of the eluted demineralised whey varies considerably in pH during the process run, ranging from pH 11 to pH 4.
4. Protein yields were also low.
5. A white flocculant was observed towards the end of the processing run, when the pH was low. It was thought this contained precipitated protein.

It was thought that the lactose removal might contribute to the pH process variations and the high effluent concentration. It was also speculated that the pH variations might cause protein precipitation in the columns. Protein precipitation was considered outside the scope of this thesis. The objective of this thesis was to provide an understanding of the mechanism causing lactose removal during IE processing. An understanding of how the lactose was removed may be used to improve the process.