

For immediate release

Blue4est® Checkout Receipt Can Be Disposed Of as Wastepaper

- **Next generation of receipts is sustainable, durable, and recyclable**
- **German Environment Agency recommends disposal as wastepaper**
- **Consumers left confused by misinformation being circulated**

Oberkirch, Germany, 11/30/2023—Koehler Paper, a Koehler Group company, is an industry leader in the field of thermal paper and started investing in the development of an environmentally friendly alternative more than 15 years ago. The first sustainable and recyclable thermal paper Blue4est® - also known as the blue receipt or eco-receipt—was launched onto the market in 2015. Now, a host of customers across Europe are using these sustainable checkout receipts. The innovative technology has since been refined, with the introduction of Blue4est® Pro paper for labels in 2022. Blue4est® is produced entirely without chemical developers, which is why the German Environment Agency recommends disposing of it as wastepaper. This allows the paper to be recycled and reused as a new raw material.

German Environment Agency: Blue4est® checkout receipts can simply be disposed of as wastepaper

Some time ago, the German Environment Agency officially confirmed – including via an announcement on its website – that blue checkout receipts can be disposed of as wastepaper. Sebastian Früh, Director Thermal Paper Division at Koehler Paper, comments: “The circular economy can only become a reality if we reuse as many raw materials as we can. When disposed of as wastepaper, blue checkout receipts actively contribute to achieving that circular economy.” The high-quality fibers in Blue4est® checkout rolls are ideal for further use in recycled packaging paper, for example.

Consumers left confused by contradictory statements on disposal of blue checkout receipts

Recently, there has been an increase in contradictory information being spread about the recyclability of Blue4est® checkout receipts. Whereas the German Environment Agency states it is fully recyclable, according to the association INGEDE (International Research Community for De-Inking Technology) blue checkout receipts can cause problems when disposed of as wastepaper, even in small quantities. This statement is inaccurate, and is causing confusion among consumers.

It is true that the black ink used in Blue4est® cannot entirely be separated from the fiber pulp when it is redissolved. The resulting recycled material is light to dark gray in color, which is of course undesirable for use in brilliant white recycled paper. However, this is also the case for other components of wastepaper like water-soluble printing inks and dyed paper. That is why, when producing high-quality graphic recycled or packaging paper from wastepaper, mixed household and commercial wastepaper is sorted and graded according to certain quality properties in accordance with the European standard EN 643.

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One of the highest quality types of wastepaper is grade 1.11.00 paper, known as “paper for de-inking.” Types of wastepaper that are unsuitable for the purpose of de-inking, such as unbleached packaging paper or Blue4est® checkout receipts, are excluded from this grade of paper as far as possible. This has been definitively confirmed by sorting tests with a much higher proportion of Blue4est® than is usually present in practice.

The wastepaper that is excluded is not suitable for use in brilliant white recycled paper because of its varied composition and the fact that it includes types of paper that are difficult to de-ink or cannot be de-inked at all. Despite that, this grade of wastepaper is still reused, becoming a new and necessary raw material.

Blue checkout receipt can be used as new raw material for almost 90% of wastepaper grades

Only around 11% of the wastepaper recycled in Germany in 2022 was paper for de-inking; the lion’s share is used in packaging paper and card. The overall demand for wastepaper is so huge that it cannot be covered by the wastepaper collected in Germany alone. For example, some manufacturers of bathroom tissue are turning away from recycled paper and are starting to use virgin fibers again.

Stating that blue checkout receipts should be disposed of as general waste and not wastepaper undermines efforts to achieve a circular economy and sows confusion among consumers. Whether it’s white, gray, brown, or blue – all wastepaper is a raw material.



Figure: The blue Blue4est® checkout receipt, also known as an eco-receipt, can be used as a raw material for producing new paper and cardboard—but only if it is disposed of as wastepaper. Source: Koehler Group

More about the Koehler Group

The Koehler Group was founded in 1807 and has been family-run to this day. The Group's core area of business is the development and production of high-quality, specialty paper, including thermal paper, playing card board, drink coasters, fine paper, carbonless paper, recycled paper, decor paper, wood pulp board, sublimation paper, and, since 2019, innovative specialty paper for the packaging industry, too. In Germany, the Koehler Group, with its around 2,500 employees, has five production sites, as well as three more in the USA. The Group operates on an international level, with an export ratio of more about 75% in 2022 and annual revenue of 1.3 billion euro.

As an energy-intensive enterprise, Koehler invests with its unit Koehler Renewable Energy in renewable energy projects such as wind energy, hydroelectric power, photovoltaics, and biomass. The Koehler Group has committed itself to producing more energy from renewable sources than is needed for paper production by 2030.

With the business unit Koehler Innovative Solutions, Koehler collaborates with start-ups to promote innovations in the core business areas of paper and renewable energy.

More information is available here: <https://www.koehler.com>

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