

# What happens when 'Merry' is banned?

- *By Penny Williams First Published on December 1, 2020*



AKA - What happens when an ingredient is banned?

The impact of an ingredient ban on formulations such as flavours, fragrances and cosmetics is far-reaching. This year the hazard classification of BMHCA (a fragrance ingredient) changed and this will lead to an eventual ban in cosmetics in Europe. Unless you are directly involved in the replacement process, it can be difficult to comprehend the many complications and huge efforts involved.

Imagine a word is banned, imagine the word '*merry*' is no longer allowed to be used.

There are several replacement words you could use, so whilst this is annoying, is it really a big deal?

If you are writing something new, about someone who is merry, you could instead say happy or cheerful. This is easy. If you were writing about someone who had a couple of glasses of mulled wine and was merry, then '*tipsy*' might be a better replacement. Clearly, the replacement of the word relates to the context of it's use.

If you want to write '*her life was a merry-go-round*'. To avoid '*merry*', you need to replace the whole phrase '*merry-go-round*'. Maybe you say '*her life was a roundabout*' – this loses some meaning which is unfortunate but if you think harder, be more creative with the sentence you could gain some meaning back by saying '*her life was a roller-coaster*'.



This alternative does not capture the original meaning of the sentence. However, if the banned word is so bad that it shouldn't be used, then these small efforts would be worthwhile.

Happy Christmas!

The far trickier problem is what do you do about all the writing which already exists? If the word is so bad that it's banned, this means removing and replacing the word everywhere it's already been used. This is a significant problem. You must find all the places the banned word is used in work that has already been distributed and within work in progress. Then, determine the context of its use and work out what is the most appropriate replacement?

'Working out' is a combination of applying experience, experimenting and assessing.

For example, if the banned ingredient is very strong and unique, replacing it might only be possible reviewing each formulation in turn. If the banned ingredient smells very similar to others, you might get lucky and, from an odour perspective, you could do the equivalent of 'find and replace'. Except... 'find and replace' is only possible if there are tolerable impacts on the formulation cost, stability and regulation status. To continue the writing analogy would be like saying the successful replacement of the banned word also depended on matching the font, including size and style, that was present in the original work.

For example, '*Merry Christmas*' could be replaced with '*Happy Christmas*', but it would not flow well if we replaced it with the same word capitalised and bold '**HAPPY Christmas**'. Now it seems we are shouting about happy (which this year would be welcome in many ways)!

Having made the best replacements possible, you then need to re-publish the works. It's time consuming, costly and you hope the replacement doesn't detract from the readers appreciation of the original work. During this lengthy process, you keep your fingers crossed no other words get banned, hoping that 'cheerful' and 'happy' remain possible to use.

The process outlined above is effectively what happens when an ingredient is banned. Fortunately, a ban is very rare, but the amount of work involved in dealing with a ban means the mere threat of it can drive the ingredient into decline, potentially changing the commercial viability of it.

Indeed, if an ingredient is under the spotlight, designers and their companies may think twice about using it, just in case there's a problem later. In new formulations, they might avoid the potential problem and choose a different ingredient, a 'synonym' from the start, just in case. Ah, lightbulb moment! Carousel - that's a good one...

Best wishes to you all for a wonderful, happy, healthy and Merry Christmas.



Now, I just need to work out replacements in 'Twas the night before Christmas' - *His eyes - how they twinkled! His dimples, how merry! His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!*

P.S Don't get me started on making the replacement word rhyme as well!