I was told that you should not put two different name brands of grease in wheel bearings. I have just replaced the bearings on my boat trailer and just want to make sure that I do not have to replace them again any time soon.

Greases of different brand names is not the issue. The issue is that greases use different compounds as thickeners, and the different thickeners are not always compatible.

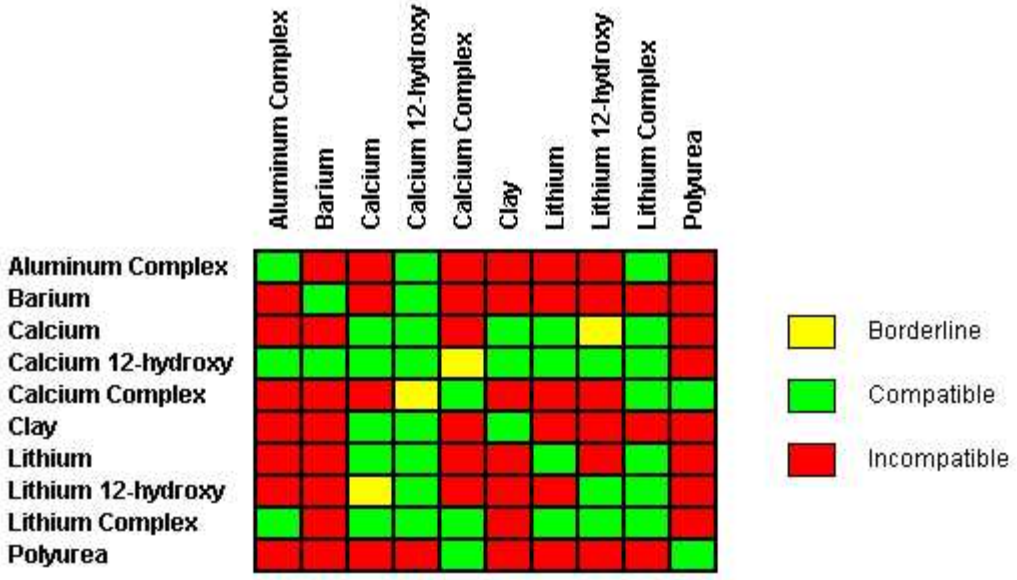
When greases made from different thickeners are mixed, the mixture may be poorer in service peformance or physical properties than either of the component products. The lessening in performance capability is called incompatibility. It may show up in any of several areas, such as (1) lower heat resistance; (2) change in consistency, usually softening; or (3) decrease in shear stability. Mixtures which show none of these changes are considered compatible.

Incompatibility is not always caused by the thickener, since each of the greases in the mixture is a complete package--thickener, fluid, and additives. Sometimes the thickener of one grease is incompatible with the fluid or the additives present in the second formulation. If the mixture proves to be significantly softer, less shear-stable, or less heat-resistant than the original grease, the mixture must be deemed incompatible.

Incompatibility is best determined in service or in service-related tests; it is not predictable. Certain thickener combinations often have been found unsatisfactory and are generally so recognized. These would include lithium and sodium greases and organo-clay and most soap greases. Tests should be run on the specific greases of interest.

The problem arises most when greases are mixed while the bearing is in service. If there is any concern about potential compatibility, thoroughly clean the bearing, race and other areas in the greased areas (including the fittings) before switching to another grease type.

Compatibility for Greases



This chart is meant only to serve as a guideline for determining compatibility. For the purposes of changing products in the field, the compatibility of the greases in question should be determined by laboratory testing.

The NLGI definition of incompatibility:
Two lubrication greases show incompatibility when a mixture of the products shows physical properties or service performance which are markedly inferior to those of either of the greases before mixing. Performance or properties inferior to one of the products and superior to the other may be due to simple mixing and would not be considered as evidence of incompatibility.

Click on Graphic to Enlarge
