

SEAL STOCK LAMINATE

The present invention relates to a method of making a laminate which is used in container closure systems. The laminate produced is a primary laminate stock including a tabstock which can then be attached to a secondary seal and used for re-closing a container using a screw cap.

It is commonplace in the packaging of a wide variety of materials ranging from pharmaceutical products to instant coffee that a closure is provided in the form of a seal connected to the neck of a container and a screw cap covering and protecting the seal which provides a re-closable cap after the seal has been removed to gain access to the container. Often the closure is such that the underside of the seal has a heat sensitive adhesive coating or a meltable plastics layer covered by a metal foil. The metal foil can provide the substrate of the seal or may include a separate substrate formed from plastics material or paper. The seal is then placed against the neck of a container and sandwiched against it by the applied screw cap. An induction heating step then heats the metal foil and in turn activates the heat sensitive adhesive layer or melts the plastic layer so that on cooling, the seal bonds to the neck of the container. A difficulty often encountered by eventual users is removal of such seals from the container. Attempts have thus been made to include a tab extending sideways from the neck of the container so that the consumer can grip this to facilitate removal of the seal.

Single component systems have been developed wherein the primary seal and secondary liner are produced as a laminate disk which is attached within the cap. The commercially available Quadriseal (RTM) system is an example of a single component system. The bottom layer of the seal portion is formed of glassine which is attached to a foil layer by means of a wax based adhesive. Upon removal of a cap into which the system is fitted, the seal portion remains adhered to the neck of the container. It can be removed by puncturing the seal and tearing it off in pieces. Due to failure of the glassine fibres, there will be traces of fibres remaining adhered around the circumference of the neck.

A further example is DE9108868 in which the primary seal and secondary liner are adhered by means of wax. On heating of the metal foil in the primary seal portion the wax melts and is absorbed into the secondary liner whereby the primary seal and secondary liner substantially separate from each other. On opening the primary seal remains adhered to the container and the secondary liner remains in the cap. This system includes a tab which is formed by only adhering the top layer

of primary seal to the remainder of the seal across part of the diameter of the seal. One problem with this system is that there are residues of wax material left on the surface of the liner such that when the container is resealed, some of the contents of the container may stick to the liner surface or may be released into the container itself. In the packaging of food and pharmaceuticals, such a wax residue is undesirable. Attempts have therefore focussed on the use of a plastics based means for adhering the primary seal to the secondary liner as a so-called release layer to avoid the use of wax. It is also very difficult to ensure that during attachment of the seal to the container to be sealed, the heat produced does not cause the delaminated portion which forms the tab to adhere to the remainder of the primary seal portion.

A further example of a system including a tab structure is the "Top Tab" structure disclosed in US 4961986. This structure includes a multilayer primary seal, one layer of which is partly de-laminated to provide a lifting tab lying wholly within the circumference of the container neck in use. This system is essentially a system comprising a primary seal and secondary liner whereby the secondary liner has been adhered to a cap. The primary seal is then pushed into the cap and held in place by engagement with the screw thread within the cap. In this system, the tabs are adhered to the primary seal by applying an adhesive layer in strips and then adhering the top layer with the result that it is only stuck in particular portions where the adhesive was present. Such a method is time consuming as it involves the gradual layer-by-layer construction of the primary seal including the tab and involves the use of a specifically formed roller to apply the adhesive in strips.

A further tab system is the successful "Lift 'n' Peel" (RTM) commercial system. This can be comprised of a primary seal and a secondary liner or just a primary seal and is usually just a primary seal. The primary seal includes a thick layer of foam such that the seal can be a product in its own right without requiring a secondary liner to give it stability. The thickness of the foam allows for discrepancies in the container or cap size. However, the foam is expensive and the resulting primary seal is difficult to manipulate. A further disadvantage associated with including foam is that it is not a printable substrate. Nowadays, consumers rely heavily on the labelling of goods and it is desirable to be able to provide a seal that is printed to indicate the manufacturer. It is usual that the printing is done on the foil layer included within the heat induction layers. This will only be seen where the layers on top of the metal foil are transparent. The "Lift 'n' Peel" system does not

present this opportunity due to the opaque nature of the foam. The top layer of the Lift "n" Peel system is a particular polyethylene terephthalate/ethylene vinyl acetate (PET/EVA) structure. The presence of EVA is necessary to ensure adhesion to both the PET tab and the foam. If the EVA were to be printed then this would interfere with the adhesion properties it exhibits. Hence reverse i.e. printing the underside of the top layer of the "Lift "n" Peel" system is not a viable option. The PET/EVA structure used is an expensive material and additionally requires the use of heated rollers to melt the EVA component of the structure to achieve adhesion. The lower the amount of EVA used, the greater the size of the heated roll required. Thus to use a material of low cost which contains minimal EVA, the size of the roll required becomes prohibitively large and expensive.

In WO 97/02997, a method for including a tab in a primary seal laminate is disclosed. In this case three feeds are passed to a chill roll in contact with a nip roll. The first feed which will form the top layer of the primary seal laminate, is EVOH coated with polypropylene. The second feed is a deadening member and the third feed is extruded tabstock e.g. polypropylene. All three feeds come into contact at the point where the chill roll and nip roll are in contact. The chill roll quenches the extruded tabstock maximising its amorphous properties and causes lamination of all three layers.

It is therefore clear that there is a need for a simple and cost effective method for including a tabstock in a primary seal laminate. Such a method should avoid the problems associated with the prior art such as having to carry out step-by-step lamination, producing an ineffective tab or the necessity to use expensive equipment and materials. It would be advantageous in the current market to produce a primary laminate including a tab which is printed or coloured.

The apparatus required must have separate unwind stations for the laminate feeds that are arranged to enable simultaneous unwinding. The laminate feeds are fed to a lamination station comprising two rollers in contact with each other. At this point the feeds are adhered to each other to produce the laminate including a tabstock which is subsequently wound onto a final roll and can then be passed through the same apparatus and adhered to a secondary laminate. The adhesive is applied vertically downwards onto the point where the feed rollers are in contact. The speed of the feed rollers should be faster than the rate of application of adhesive. The adhesive can be applied directly from the die head of an extruder.

The present invention provides a method for producing a primary laminate including a tabstock the method comprising the steps of:

- a) feeding a seal laminate comprising bottom food contact layers including a foil layer and a top polyester layer to a laminating station;
- 5 b) feeding a tabstock, which is narrower than the seal laminate, to the laminating station such that the bottom of the tabstock and the top polyester layer of the seal laminate come into contact to form a primary substrate, the top face of which is partly comprised of the top face of the tabstock and partly comprised of the top polyester layer of the seal laminate, prior to reaching the laminating station;
- 10 c) feeding a plastic film stock which has a top and bottom surface to the laminating station; and
- d) continuously extruding a polymeric adhesive between the top face of the primary substrate and the bottom surface of the plastic film stock such that the two are adhered together with a bond strength greater than 15N/cm when the
- 15 tabstock is pulled at 90° to the machine direction and 180° to the primary substrate, to form a primary laminate including a tabstock.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the bottom food contact layers of the seal laminate are induction heat sealable and comprise a layer of aluminium foil coated on its lowermost face which will ultimately be in contact with the neck of

20 a container with a layer of hot melt adhesive. A layer of polyethylene terephthalate may be interposed between the hot melt adhesive and aluminium foil layer to isolate the foil from the contents of any container to which it is attached and so prevent corrosion of the foil layer. This polyethylene terephthalate layer generally has a thickness in the range from 10 to 14µm. It is attached to the foil layer using either a

25 solvent or solvent-less adhesive lamination. Where it is included, the polyethylene terephthalate has already been attached to the foil layer by the supplier. Preferably the thickness of the foil layer is in the range from 12-30µm.

In a further embodiment of the present invention the bottom food contact layers of the seal laminate are conduction heat sealable.

30 In a yet further embodiment of the present invention, the bottom food contact layer of the seal laminate comprise a layer comprising a layer of metal foil coated on its lowermost face which will ultimately be in contact with the neck of a container with glassine. Glassine is a paper based material which is formed from pulp which has been beaten to the extent that its constituent fibres are all very short

35 resulting in a brittle material which is almost transparent. Glassine is commercially

available from, for example, Ahlstrom in France. The glassine is adhered to the lowermost face of the metal foil by a layer of adhesive. While conventionally in such a system, a wax based adhesive would be used to adhere the glassine to the foil, it is preferable in the invention to use a polyethylene- based or a water-based
5 adhesive in order to ensure a sufficiently strong bond is formed.

The bottom glassine layer of the primary laminate may be adhered to the neck of a container using a conventional adhesive such as, for example, PVA. In this embodiment, the thickness of the foil layer may be as low as 9µm. In use, where the primary laminate is removed from a container neck, failure will occur in
10 the glassine layer such that paper fibres remain adhered to the neck of the container but the primary laminate is still removed as a single piece. The advantage of the paper fibres remaining adhered to the neck is that it provides a tamper evident system.

The foil layer may optionally be printed such that the identity of the
15 manufacturer of the ultimate contents of any container to which the primary laminate is adhered is evident. Consumers view this as a guarantee of safety, quality and of the origin of the contents. Where the foil layer is printed, this will have been done by the supplier of the foil layer.

The top layer of the seal laminate is a layer of polyester. Such a layer is
20 included in order to impart strength into the primary seal laminate such that it can not simply be ripped or broken easily manually. Additionally, including this layer means that the print is not in direct contact with the extruded polymeric adhesive and thus elimination of potentially problematic interactions. Preferably the thickness of the top polyester layer is at least 12µm. A preferred thickness is in the range
25 from 12 to 25µm. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the polyester is polyethylene terephthalate. Where the top polyester layer of the seal laminate is polyethylene terephthalate, it is preferable that prior to being contact with the polymeric adhesive, it has been corona treated.

As is clear, it is preferable that one of the components of the primary seal
30 laminate is printed. This can be achieved by including a foil layer with a preprinted upper face in the heat sealable layers. Alternatively, the underneath of the polyester layer which will not be in contact with the polymeric adhesive can be printed. In both cases it is required that the polyester layer is transparent such that the printing on either the metal foil or underneath of the polyester layer is

immediately visible to the end user. The printing is carried out prior to the inclusion of the tabstock.

The primary seal laminate formed includes a free tab as is included in the "Top Tab" (RTM) and "Lift "n" Peel" (RTM) structures described in US 4961986. In the primary seal laminate produced, while the relative dimensions of the tab are not limited, it may be preferable that, for example the tab lies wholly within the circumference of the container neck and typically the tab occupies about 50% of the seal area, where the primary laminate has a diameter of less than 36mm. The tab is provided by adhering a tab stock to the top polyester layer of the heat sealable laminate.

The tabstock which is fed to the laminating station as detailed in step (b) is narrower in width than the heat sealable laminate. Preferably the tabstock is formed of a polyester, more preferably polyethylene terephthalate. In one embodiment of the present invention, the bottom surface of the tabstock which is ultimately in contact with the top polyester layer of the heat sealable laminate may be coated with a release material, for example, silicone. This is done in order to further ensure that when the finished primary seal laminate is adhered to a container by induction heat sealing, the tabstock does not stick to the top polyester layer. The tabstock may further include a coloured or printed layer formed of polyester and attached to the other polyester layer by an adhesive tie layer.

In step (b), in one embodiment of the present invention, rather than feeding a single tabstock, the feed may comprise a plurality of narrow tabstocks arranged at regularly spaced apart intervals. In this way, a wide sheet of primary laminate including a tabstock may be formed which can then be cut as required thus improving the efficiency of the system.

As detailed in step (c), the third feed which is fed to the laminating station is a plastic film stock. Preferably the plastic film is selected from the group consisting of polyethylene terephthalate, polyamide, polypropylene or a composite. Most preferably the plastic film is polyethylene terephthalate. The width of this stock is the same as the width of the heat sealable laminate. This plastic film layer must be transparent in order that the printing of the lower layers is visible to the end user. Preferably the thickness of the plastic film layer is at least 12µm. More preferably the thickness of the plastic film layer is in the range from 12-36µm. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, where plastic film is PET stock, preferably it is both coextruded and corona treated. This is done in order to ensure that the bond

formed to the polymeric adhesive in step (d) is sufficiently strong. The PET stock can be obtained in a coextruded state. Examples of suitable materials include Lumirror 10.47 which is a film that is coextruded on one side and are commercially available from Toray.

5 Prior to reaching the laminating station, the bottom face of the tabstock and the top PET layer of the seal laminate are brought into contact. At this stage, there is no adhesion between the two feeds. The two feeds are fed in contact with one another to the laminating station. In order to achieve this, the two feeds must approach the laminating station from the same side. The combination of the seal
10 laminate and tabstock in contact with each other is referred to as a primary substrate as they are passed to the laminating station together. As the tabstock is necessarily narrower in width than the seal laminate, the top face of the primary substrate presented to the laminating station is formed partly of the top face of the tabstock and partly of the top polyester layer of the seal laminate.

15 In the laminating station, the primary substrate is brought into contact with the plastic film stock which is fed simultaneously to the laminating station but from the opposite side. At the point where the top face of the primary substrate is in contact with the bottom surface of the plastic film stock, a polymeric adhesive is continuously extruded between the two surfaces. The result is that the plastic film
20 stock is adhered over the entire surface area of the top face of the primary substrate. This means that over part of the width, the plastic stock will be adhered to the top plastic film layer of the seal laminate and over the remaining width the plastic film stock will be adhered to the top face of the tabstock. The result is then that a tab portion is formed which lies wholly within the circumference of the primary
25 laminate formed.

 The bond formed between the top plastic film layer of the seal laminate and the plastic film stock must have a strength in the greater than 15N/cm when the tab is pulled at 90° to the machine direction and 180° to the primary substrate. This is in order to ensure that when using the tab to remove the seal from a container, the
30 tab remains adhered to the primary laminate upon application of a pulling force to the tab.

 Preferably the polymeric adhesive which is continuously extruded is selected from polyethylene, polyethylene vinyl acetate, maleic anhydride/acrylate ester/polyethylene copolymer and ethylene methyl acrylate. Most preferably the

polymeric adhesive has a melt flow index in the range from 1 to 17dg/min.

Preferably the coat weight of the adhesive layer is at least 30gm⁻².

In a preferred embodiment the coat weight of the adhesive layer is in the range from 20 to 40gm⁻². In a preferred embodiment, the polymeric adhesive is an ethylene methyl acrylate co-polymer.

In order that any printing can be seen, preferably the polymeric adhesive and the plastic film stock are transparent.

The primary laminate including a tabstock as made according to the present invention may then be attached to a secondary seal stock so as to form a one component seal and liner system. This can be done using the same apparatus as used to form the primary laminate including a tabstock. More specifically, the method involves the steps of:

feeding the primary laminate including a tabstock to a laminating station;

simultaneously feeding a secondary seal stock which has an overall stiffness

in the range from 200-1200gcm and has an upper face for contact with a container closure and a lower face for sealing against a container to the laminating station; and

extruding a polymeric adhesive with a melt flow index in the range from 5-17dg/min through a die head between the top plastic film face of the primary laminate including a tabstock and lower face of the secondary seal stock to adhere the two to form a seal stock laminate.

The secondary seal stock of the present invention has a stiffness in the range from 200-1200gcm. This stiffness is measured according to the Teledyne Taber V-S Stiffness Tester (Model 150-B). The method employed involves cutting the test samples to size of 3.8cm by 7cm (1.5 x 2.75inches) one with the grain of the board and one at right angles to the grain. The test is carried out at room temperature. The top of the sample is then clamped so that it is central, parallel to the tester face and the bottom of the sample is resting on the plate below the rollers of the machine. The right hand roller is brought up to just touch the bottom of the sample without deflecting it. The left hand roller is brought into light contact with the sample and then backed off by a quarter of a turn. Care is taken to ensure that the scale, driving disc and pendulum are all aligned at zero. The sample is deflected in one direction by pushing the operating switch until the pendulum is at 15°. The value on the fixed scale is recorded. The direction of the pendulum is then reversed and the sample is deflected in the opposite direction by 15° and the value is

recorded from the fixed scale. The average of the two values is taken and the appropriate weight multiplication factor is used to determine the stiffness in Taber units (gcm)

5 In some embodiments, where a secondary seal stock is included, it may be formed of pulpboard or folding box board. Alternatively, the secondary seal stock may be a synthetic laminate. Where the secondary seal stock is a synthetic laminate it is preferable that it comprises a foam with a facing layer on each face thereof. The thickness of the foam layer is preferably in the range from 0.85-1.65mm and suitable materials include polyethylene and polypropylene foam. The
10 thickness of the facing layers is preferably in the range from 20-70µm.

The facing layers may comprise a single layer, for example a polyethylene terephthalate, polyethylene, polypropylene or polyamide film, or alternatively may comprise multilayers. The nature of the facing layer depends on the nature of the foam layer and the polymeric adhesive. Where a facing layer which is equally
15 compatible with both the foam layer and polymeric adhesive cannot be found, it is necessary for the facing layers to be multilayer to achieve a graded layer which will adhere tightly to the adhesive and subsequently the foam. The graded layers will tend to be able to heat seal to itself. Where the facing layers are multilayer, it is preferred that the facing layers comprise a homopolymer core with a copolymer
20 layer on each face thereof. The homopolymer core is chosen to ensure that the synthetic laminate has the appropriate stiffness.

In one embodiment of the present invention where a secondary seal stock is adhered to the primary laminate, the foam layer is polyethylene foam and the facing layers are comprised of three layers, specifically a homopolymer core with
25 copolymer layers on each face thereof wherein the homopolymer core comprises polypropylene and the copolymer is a polyethylene/polypropylene copolymer. Inclusion of the polypropylene homopolymer layer ensures that the synthetic laminate has the appropriate stiffness. Such a secondary seal stock can be obtained commercially or can be produced by lamination as required.

30 In this embodiment of the present invention where the foam layer is polyethylene foam and the facing layers are comprised of a polypropylene core with polypropylene/polyethylene copolymer layers on each face thereof preferably the polymeric adhesive is provided by coextruding polypropylene and polyethylene through the die head such that the polypropylene is in contact with the lower face of

the secondary seal stock and the polyethylene is in contact with the top plastic film face of the primary laminate.

In order to adhere the primary seal laminate to the secondary seal stock, a polymeric adhesive is extruded between the top plastic film face of the primary seal
5 laminate and the lower face of the secondary seal stock. The polymeric adhesive must have a melt flow index in the range of 5-25dg/min. The method used to determine the melt flow index is International Standard ISO 113/ASTM D 1238.

The strengths of the different bonds formed in the seal stock laminate are important. In use, the bond formed between the food contact layer of the laminate
10 and the neck of the container which it is used to seal, should be sufficiently strong that the primary laminate remains adhered to the neck of the container when the lid is removed and a complete seal is maintained. It should, however, be weaker than the strength of the bond at the point of contact between the top layer of the seal laminate and the tabstock.

15 Where a secondary seal stock is adhered to the primary laminate, a polymeric adhesive with a melt flow index in the quoted range is required in order to ensure that a true weld is formed between the adhesive and the lower face of the secondary seal stock while the bond formed between the adhesive and the top plastic film layer of the primary laminate is not a true weld. In order to achieve this,
20 the two surfaces in contact with the adhesive must be different. The adhesive must bond more strongly to the lower face of the secondary seal stock than the top plastic film layer of the primary seal laminate. The top plastic film layer of the primary laminate is therefore required to have a higher surface energy than the lower face of the second seal stock. The term "true weld" refers to the fact that a
25 bond is formed between the adhesive and the lower face of the secondary seal stock such that if an attempt is made to separate the adhesive and lower face of the secondary seal, the adhesive material and lower face material tend to fail in preference to the bond. Preferably the bond formed between the polymeric adhesive and the top plastic layer of the primary seal stock has a peel strength in
30 the range 50-130g as measured on a 25mm wide strip at 1500mm/min. This means that in use, upon application of a torque to the cap of a container to which the seal stock laminate is attached the bond between the top plastic film stock layer of the primary laminate and the polymeric adhesive will break such that the primary laminate remains adhered to the container while the secondary seal stock would
35 remain in the cap.

Where the seal stock laminate is attached to a container fitted with a screw cap, on turning the screw cap, the end user will break the bond and hear a "cracking noise". Where such a noise is heard it provides evidence that the container has not been tampered with. Suitable polymeric adhesives include low density polyethylene or coextruded polyethylene and polypropylene. Preferably the polymeric adhesive is polyethylene. The seal stock laminate is intended for use on closures with neck sizes of up to at least 100mm in diameter.

The polymeric adhesive is extruded through a die head. The length of the die head is preferably in the range from 500 to 2000mm. The gap of the die head is preferably in the range 450 to 800µm more preferably, the gap is in the range from 500 to 700µm. The speed of the feed rollers is in the range from 50 to 120m/min. A typical speed of the feed rollers is, for example, 100m/min.

The seal stock laminate of the present invention is generally formed in wide strips. Therefore in order to form the tabs, it is necessary to cut the wide strips of seal stock laminate into narrower strips. These narrower strips can then be cut to form a vessel closing assembly ready to be applied to a container. The cutting of the wide strips into narrower strips needs to be done with precision in order to ensure that the cuts are made at the correct positions to produce the tabs. The vessel closing assembly supplied ready to be used in the form of tapes can then be punched from the narrower strips and fixed inside the top of a screw cap in a procedure and/or location separate to the method of making the seal stock laminate. Unlike a conventional screw cap the screw cap suitable for use in the present invention must include a retention feature. Preferably the retention feature is quadrant shaped on top and flat underneath to minimise damage on insertion of the vessel closing assembly. The retention feature may include a multi-turn screw-thread or a multi-start part turn thread. The container may be made of glass or plastic material such as polyethylene, polyester, polyvinyl chloride, polypropylene or acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene polymer.

A screw cap equipped with a vessel closing assembly in accordance with the present invention may be screwed on to the open neck of a container thus sandwiching the vessel closing assembly between the open neck of the container and the top of the cap. The primary laminate is then adhered to the open neck of the container by induction heating.

An embodiment of the present invention will now be described with reference to the following figures, in which:

Figure 1 is a cross section through an example of a primary laminate including a tabstock as formed according to the method of the present invention with a vertical dimension greatly exaggerated.

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram of the laminating apparatus used in the method of the present invention.

Figure 3 is a cross section through an example of the seal stock laminate with a vertical dimension greatly exaggerated.

Figure 4 is a cross-section through a screw cap showing the vessel closing assembly in place.

Figure 5 is a perspective view showing the seal in place on the neck of a container.

Figure 6 is a cross section through a second embodiment of a primary laminate including a tabstock as formed according to the method of the present invention with a vertical dimension greatly exaggerated.

Example 1

A seal laminate (1) was obtained commercially from Gerosa, Spain. The seal laminate comprised heat sealable layers (2,3) for adhesion to a container to be sealed and a foil layer (4). The top layer of the seal laminate (5) is PET which has been printed on the reverse side. As an alternative to purchasing this part of the structure (2, 3, 4) as in this example, it may be laminated to the foil layer in a separate step to form the heat sealable laminate. This seal laminate is rolled onto a first feed roll (9) in the laminating apparatus.

The second feed roll (10) in the laminating apparatus is the source of the tabstock (6). The tabstock used is formed of PET which has a thickness in the range from 12-25 μ m. The width of the (6) is in the range from 20-60mm.

A third feed roll (11) is loaded with a PET stock (8) which can be obtained commercially from Toray, Europe. The thickness of the PET stock (8) is in the range from 12-36 μ m. The PET stock (8) used is a co-extruded PET heat seal layer in order to ensure optimal adhesion.

The seal laminate (1), tabstock (6) and PET stock (8) are simultaneously fed to the laminating station (12) where an extruder (13) is positioned vertically above the point of contact between the feeds. Prior to reaching the laminating station (12), the seal laminate (1) and tabstock (6) are brought into contact to form a primary substrate (1a).

Ethylene methyl acrylate copolymer (7) is then extruded continuously as a curtain from the extruder (13) between the top face of the primary laminate (1a) and the bottom face of the PET stock (8). The extrusion conditions were such that a temperature of 100°C to 200°C was attained at the nip. The rollers (14) and (21) are moving at a speed of 70m/min relative to the speed of application of the adhesive. the bottom face of the PET. Stock (8) and the resulting primary laminate including a tabstock is passed via a chill roller (14) to be rolled on to a final product roll (15). This process is illustrated schematically in Fig 2.

The peel strength of a primary laminate formed using a PET stock (8) thickness of 36µm and a tabstock thickness of 12µm wherein the coat weight of the extruded ethylene methyl acrylate copolymer (7) was 40gm⁻³.

The coat weight was determined as follows: a 0.5m to 1m length of paper backed polyester which has a width of 1m was passed to the laminating station in place of the primary laminate. A curtain of EVA was then extruded continuously between the top polyester face of the paper backed polyester and the bottom face of the PET stock (8). 10x10cm samples were then cut across the width of the web and their weight in g was recorded. The weight of the paper backed polyester and PET stock (8) were subtracted from this figure and the result was multiplied by 100 to give a coat weight in gm⁻².

As detailed previously, the top face of the primary substrate and the bottom surface of the plastic film stock must be adhered together with a bond strength greater than 15N/cm. In a separate experiment the bond strength was determined by using the method detailed as follows. The apparatus used was a Tensile Tester attached to a desktop PC, two jaws, a 80 x 12.5mm measuring template and a sharp knife. A sample with dimensions of 12.5mm long and 10mm wide perpendicular to the machine direction was cut across a section of the primary laminate. Steps are taken to ensure that a section of the PET stock (8) and the primary laminate including a tabstock is separated. The height of the jaws is adjusted such that the tab is inserted into one and the base into the other. The sample is positioned so as to be pointing towards the machine. The tab and base are then pulled apart and the force required to do so is recorded from the apparatus.

Example 2

The primary laminate including a tabstock (1b) as formed in Example 1 was then adhered to a secondary seal stock to form a one component seal and

liner system. The secondary seal stock (17) was manufactured on site at Unipac and comprises a foam layer with a thickness of 1.25mm which is polyethylene foam (18) faced with layers on either side of polypropylene film (19). The stiffness was 320gcm.

5 The same apparatus as was used to form the primary laminate including a tabstock (1b) detailed in Example 1 was used. The primary laminate including a tabstock was loaded onto feed roll (11) and the secondary seal stock (17) was loaded onto the third feed roll (9). In this case, the second feed roll (10) was redundant and thus not used. The primary laminate including a tabstock and
10 secondary seal stock (17) were fed simultaneously to the laminating station (12). A curtain of low density polyethylene (16) with a melt flow index of 7.5dg/min and polypropylene (16a) with an MFI of 11dg/min was extruded continuously from the extruder between the top polyester face (8) of the primary laminate including a tabstock and the lower face of the secondary seal stock (19a) adhering the two to
15 form a seal stock laminate (20) wherein the polypropylene (16a) adheres to the lower face of the secondary seal stock (19a) and the polyethylene (16) adheres to the top polyester face (8).

 The seal stock laminate was then cut into narrow strips. From these strips, circular discs were punched to form discs of the seal stock laminate. The seal stock
20 laminate (20) is fixed inside the top of a screw cap (22) by means of a retention feature (23). A screw cap equipped with the seal stock laminate in accordance with the present invention is then screwed onto the open neck of the cap. The cap (22) and bottle (24) are then subjected to an induction heating step in which the foil is heated around its periphery by the generation of eddy currents within it, which, in
25 turn, melts the heat sealable layer (2) to bond the primary laminate including a tabstock to the open neck of the bottle.

Example 3

 A seal laminate (29) comprising bottom food contact layers (25, 26) for adhesion to a container to be sealed and a foil layer (27) which has been printed
30 are purchased from Gerosa, Spain. The lowermost layer (25) of the seal laminate consists of glassine paper with a coat weight of at least 30gm². Layer (26) is a layer of water-based adhesive with a coat weight of at least 3gm² (dry weight). The layer of aluminium foil (27) has a thickness of 8µm. The top layer of the seal laminate (28) is PET. This is purchased as a part of the structure (25, 26, 27) or
35 laminated to the foil layer in a separate step to form the seal laminate.

The primary laminate was formed using this seal laminate (29) in place of the seal laminate (1) having heat induction sealable layers of example 1 to produce a primary laminate. The resulting primary laminate is illustrated in Figure 6.

CLAIMS

1. A method for producing a primary laminate including a tabstock the method comprising the steps of:
 - a) feeding a seal laminate (1) comprising bottom food contact layers (2,3) including a foil layer (4) and a top polyester layer (5) to a laminating station;
 - b) simultaneously feeding a tabstock (6), which is narrower than the seal laminate, to the laminating station (12) such that the bottom of the tabstock and the top polyester layer of the seal laminate come into contact to form a primary substrate (1a), the top face of which is partly comprised of the top face of the tabstock and partly comprised of the top polyester layer of the seal prior to reaching the laminating station;
 - c) simultaneously feeding a plastic film stock (8) which has top and bottom surfaces to the laminating station; and
 - d) continuously extruding a polymeric adhesive (7) between the top face of the primary substrate and bottom surface of the plastic film stock such that the two are adhered together with a bond strength greater than 15N/cm when the tabstock is pulled at 90° to the machine direction and at 180° to the primary substrate, to form a primary laminate including a tabstock.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein either the foil layer or the underside of the polyester layer which form part of the seal laminate have been printed.
3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the plastic film stock is formed from a material selected from the group consisting of polyethylene terephthalate, polyamide, polyethylene or a composite of the aforementioned materials.
4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the plastic film stock is polyethylene terephthalate.
5. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the top polyester layer of the seal laminate is polyethylene terephthalate.
6. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the polymeric adhesive has a melt flow index in the range from 5 to 25dg/min.
7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the tabstock is formed of polyethylene terephthalate.
8. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the tabstock includes a coloured or printed PET layer.

9. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein in step (b), the tabstock comprises a plurality of narrow tabstocks arranged at regularly spaced intervals.

10. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the thickness of the top plastic film layer of the heat sealable laminate is in the range from 12 to 36 μ m.

11. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the thickness of the plastic film stock is in the range from 12 to 36 μ m

12. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the thickness of the tabstock is in the range from 12 to 25 μ m.

13. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the polymeric adhesive is ethylene methyl acrylate.

14. A method of making a laminate according to claim 1 comprising the further steps of :

a) feeding the primary laminate including a tabstock (1b) to a first laminating station;

b) simultaneously feeding a secondary seal stock (17) which has an overall stiffness in the range from 200-1200gcm and has an upper face for contact with a container closure and a lower face for sealing against a container, to the laminating station;

c) extruding a second polymeric adhesive through a die head between the top plastic film face of the primary laminate including a tabstock and the lower face of the secondary seal stock to form a seal stock laminate.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the second polymeric adhesive has a melt flow index in the range from 5 to 25dg/min

16. The method according to claim 14, wherein the second polymeric adhesive is polyethylene.

17. The method according to claim 14, wherein in step c) the second polymeric adhesive comprises two polymeric adhesives which are coextruded.

18. The method according to claim 17, wherein the two polymeric adhesives are polyethylene and polypropylene.

19. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the length of the die head is in the range from 500 to 2000mm

20. The method according to claim 19, wherein the gap of the die head is in the range from 500 to 700 μ m.

21. The method according to claim 14, wherein the secondary seal stock is pulpboard or kraftboard.

22. The method according to claim 21, wherein the thickness of the pulpboard or kraftboard is in the range from 500 to 1000 μ m.

5 23. The method according to claim 14, wherein the secondary seal stock is a synthetic laminate.

24. The method according to claim 23, wherein the synthetic laminate comprises a foam with a facing layer on each face thereof.

25. The method according to claim 24, wherein the foam is polyethylene or polypropylene foam.

26. The method according to claim 24 or 25, wherein the foam layer has a thickness in the range from 0.85 to 1.65mm.

27. The method according to either claim 24 or 25, wherein the facing layers have a thickness in the range from 20 to 70 μ m.

15 28. The method according to claim 17, wherein the facing layer comprises a homopolymer centre with a copolymer on each face thereof.

29. The method according to claim 28, wherein the homopolymer is polypropylene and the copolymer is a polypropylene/polyethylene copolymer.

20 30. The method according to claim 28, wherein the second polymeric adhesive comprises coextruded polypropylene and polyethylene such that the polypropylene is in contact with the lower face of the secondary seal stock and the polyethylene is in contact with the top polyester face of the primary laminate.

31. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the metal foil has a thickness in the range from 12 to 30 μ m.

25 32. The method according to claim 31 wherein the metal foil is aluminium.

33. The method according to any preceding claim, wherein the bottom layers (2,3) of the seal laminate (1) are induction heat sealable layers.

30 34. The method according to any of claims 1 to 32, wherein bottom layer (2) of the seal laminate (1) is formed from glassine and layer (3) is an adhesive layer.

35. The method according to claim 34, wherein the adhesive layer consists of a water based adhesive or a polyethylene-based adhesive.

35 36. The method according to any of claims 1 to 32, wherein the bottom layers (2,3) of the seal laminate are conduction heat sealable layers.

37. A primary laminate comprising:
a seal laminate (1) comprising bottom food contact layers (2,3) including a foil layer (4) and a top polyethylene terephthalate layer (5);
a tabstock (6) which has a top and bottom face wherein the bottom face is in
5 contact with the top polyethylene terephthalate layer (5); and
a layer of plastic film (8) adhered to the top face of the tabstock (6) by an extruded polymeric adhesive (7).
38. A laminate comprising:
the primary laminate according to claim 37 adhered to a secondary seal
10 stock which has an overall stiffness in the range from 200-1200gcm wherein the top plastic film layer (8) of the primary laminate is adhered to the secondary seal stock by an extruded polymeric adhesive.
39. A method which comprises taking the primary laminate of claim 37 or laminate of claim 38 and cutting it into strips.
- 15 40. The method according to claim 39, wherein the strips are then shaped to form vessel closing assembly.
41. A screw cap which has retained within it the shaped vessel closing assembly according to claim 40.
- 20 42. A container which is fitted with a cap according to claim 41 wherein the seal laminate is sealed to the mouth of the container to enclose a liquid or solid substance.