



Mesco Salts:

The First African Cichlid Product Manufacturer

By Rusty Wessel



Variety of Mesco bottles.

This goes back to my high school days Circa 1975. I spent quite a bit of my free time hanging out at my local pet shop (Shively Pet Center) owned by the late Mrs Anderson in Louisville Kentucky and her favorite employee Mike Coleman invited me to not only attend the Local fish club (Louisville Tropical Fish Fanciers, which I am still an active member of today) and a special all cichlid club that met about once a month at a local members house (usually Dee Coates house). Mike and I have been friends for over 50 years and we both keep aquariums today but this led to my story about Mesco Salts and the purpose of this article.



The Louisville Tropical Fish Fanciers was founded 1959 by the late Discus breeder Art Hayley.

Two of the members of this special Sunday meeting were Art & Jo Ann Greenameyer. Art was an airline pilot that flew to New York several trips per week and had access to the new imports of African Cichlids that at that time were arriving for the first time ever in the USA market. He had a direct line to purchasing Rift Lake Cichlids from the only source (African Imports) in New Jersey and free cargo with being a pilot. All of these fish direct from the Lake had never been seen before. A fascinating time for cichlids and the hobby in general. The year was mid 1970. So, a long time ago. Anyhow, Jo Ann took a fancy to me being a high school kid and took me under her wing. Jo Ann not only kept a basement full of aquariums she also ran a wholesale distributor for her own company called Mesco Salts. Mesco at that time was the only manufacturer of a salt product designed for Malawi and Tanganyikan fish. Mesco Salts was an additive to the aquarium that helped duplicate the high ph and trace elements of both Lake Malawi and Tanganyika. The product worked and was instrumental in keeping healthy African's during the 70s especially since only wild fish were available and very few available tank raised African cichlids, so this product really increased the chances of success with breeding and maintaining these beautiful and unknown wild fishes. When the salts were applied the tank turned milky white and after a few hours the salts were dissolved and the fish were happy. This is where I started my first sales experience. Although Jo Ann sold most of her products to out of state entities she asked me to help introduce the product to the local pet shops. Back then I remember there were over 30 local pets shops in the Kentucky/Southern Indiana area. So, I arranged many of the local shops to purchase this amazing product. On weekends Art Greenameyer, the mastermind behind the formula, allowed me to help add the secret ingredients to the mixing machine and place the labels on the plastic bottles. A fun moment for a high school kid. I remember Art was particular that the product only could be placed in solid opaque containers (white) to keep ultraviolet light from spoiling the ingredients. Its funny, I do not ever remember actually getting a check for my work and my father often asked if I got paid, but I know I enjoyed trading my pay for those rare African Cichlids.



Frontosa cichlid from Lake Tanganyika.



Variety of Lake Malawi cichlids.



Photo of Rusty's childhood cichlid pond.



Childhood photos of Rusty.

Just a few years ago after the passing of both Greenameyers' I was approached by the son who wanted to sell the entire operation of Mesco Salts. Mesco had stopped operating some 20 years ago so I assumed really no one would be interested in the product today. In addition, there are many similar products already available in the market today that work exceptionally well. Eventually, this led me to contacting Gary Bagnall of Zoo Med. I knew Gary was opening an incredible museum of reptile, bird and aquarium products in California. My thought was it would make an incredible display because the entire operation was still intact. The salts, the secret ingredients, the formula, the bottles, the labels and the mixing machine. Gary eventually cut the deal and the entire operation was loaded onto pallets and shipped to California. Another bygone operation that will be preserved in history. Thank you Zoo Med and Mr. Gary Bagnall.

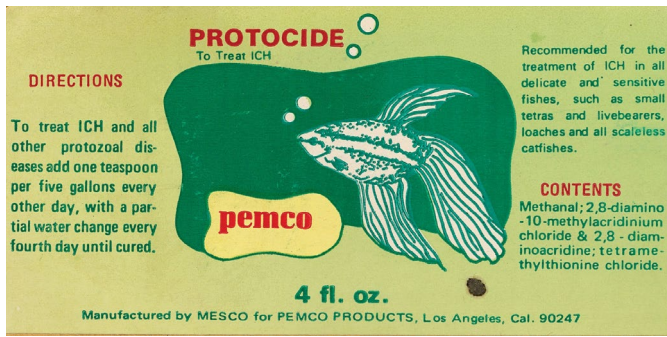
After the Museum of Aquarium and Pet History purchased the remains of the Mesco Company, we uncovered printing plates and labels for both PEMCO (aquarium manufacturer) and Pet Parade (pet store chain?). Mesco must have private labeled products for both these companies.



5"x2 1/2" Pemco Label for Tetra-Aid



5"x2 1/2" Pemco Label for Methacide



5"x2 1/2" Pemco Label for Protocide



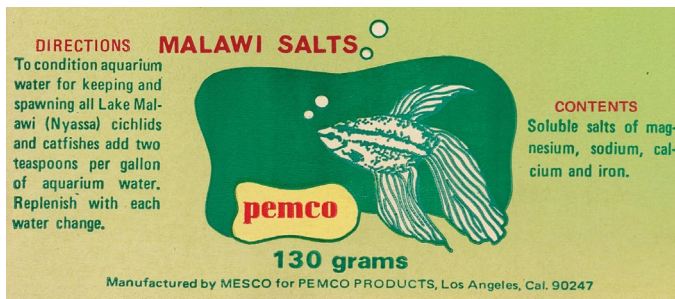
5"x2 1/2" Pemco Label for Brood-Tonic



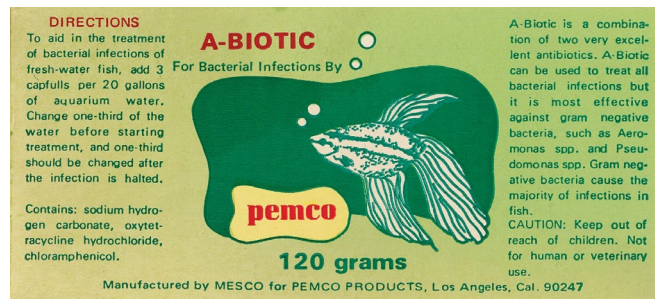
5"x2 1/2" Pemco Label for Chlorine Neutralizer



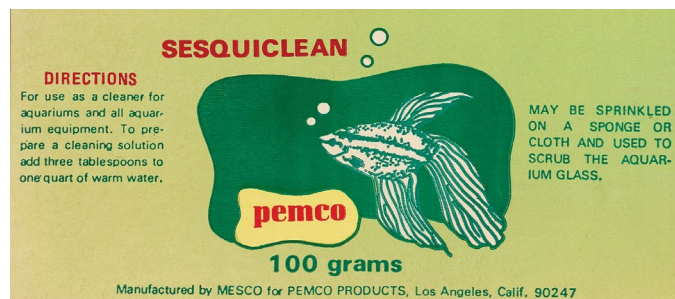
5"x2 1/2" Pemco Label for Algo



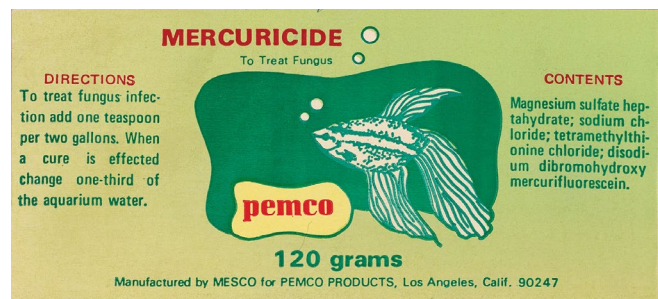
5"x2 1/4" Pemco Label for Malawi Salts



5"x2 1/4" Pemco Label for A-Biotic



5"x2 1/4" Pemco Label for Sesquiclean



5"x2 1/4" Pemco Label for Mercuricide

MOLLUSCACIDE

DIRECTIONS

To kill unwanted snails, leeches and other invertebrates add one teaspoon per ten gallons to aquarium. Change one-third of water after twenty four hours.

Manufactured by Mesco
for PEMCO PRODUCTS, Los Angeles, Cal. 90247

To Kill Snails



CONTENTS

Methanal; copper (II) sulfate pentahydrate; iron (III) acetylacetonate hydrate.

1 fl. oz.

4"x1 5/8" Pemco Label for Molluscacide

DIRECTIONS

Pemco Remedy is excellent for Ich, mouth and body fungus, tail rot and injured fins. Raise temp. to 82°-85° and add 1 tblsp. Pemco Remedy for 5 gal. When disease symptoms have disappeared, slowly reduce temp. to 75°

To promote the beauty and vigor of your fish, 2 tspns. each week for 15 gallons of water.

REMEDY & TONIC



1 fl. oz.

Manufactured for Pemco Products,
Los Angeles, Calif. 90247

Should always be used before introducing new fish into the aquarium.

CONTENTS

Tetramethylthionine chloride (methylene blue); quinine bisulfate; 2,8-diamino-10-methylacridinium chloride and 2,8-diaminoacridine (acriflavine neutral).

4"x1 5/8" Pemco Label for Remedy & Tonic



Various 5"x2 1/4" Pet Parade Labels



5 1/2"x3" Pet Parade Label for Methylene Blue