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Action in Sacramento

Senate to Consider DDT

Sacramento

The State Senate voted unanimously yesterday to consider legislation which could prohibit the sale and use of DDT and certain other pesticides in California.

The move was seen as a symptom of the growing global concern over the use of the powerful chemical, which critics say is having an increasingly lethal effect on birds, wildlike and marine animals.

Senators John A. Nejedly (rep-Walnut Creek) and Lewis F. Sherman (Rep-Berkeley) had to get special permission for the Legislature to consider their bill.

That is because the April 8 deadline for unrestricted introduction of new bills has passed. The Senate vote yesterday was 33 to 0.

REASON

Nejedly told newsmen "the evidence is overwhelming" that DDT and some other pesticides are being absorbed by fish and other wildlife — and in turn is passed on to humans.

In addition to DDT, the bill would slap a prohibition on parathion, aldrin, dieldrin and other pesticides that retain their chemical composition after entering the body.

The measure would allow the State agricultural director to determine whether any of the pesticides are a health hazard and, if so, prevent the sale, use or possession of them.

CRABS

Sherman and Nejedly said they were particularly alarmed by a recent study showing that Californias' crab industry is threatened by DDT.

Only last week, State marine biologist Richard Poole reported the results of a three-year study into the reason for the drastic drop in the Bay Area harvest of fresh crab.

He said adult female crabs show significant but nonlethal levels of DDT residues in their ovaries — which reach lethal levels when the pesticide passes from the ovaries into their eggs. As a result, millions of crab larvae die before they can be hatched.

The Swedish government last month clamped a two-year ban on the use of DDT and efforts are being pressed to extend the prohibition throughout all of Scandinavia.

Earlier this month, a Swedish Institute of Public Health research team warned the Baltic Sea has been polluted to such an extent by DDT that it is dangerous for humans to eat some fish from there on a regular basis.

MICHIGAN

The State of Michigan is moving to prohibit the use of DDT and a year-long moratorium on the use of the chemical is already in effect in Arizona.

The governors of Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana and Minnesota last month launched a study into the potential hazards of DDT and what would happen if its use were discontinued.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture on April 16 prohibited the use of DDT on near-mature cabbages and lettuce to prevent the buildup of dangerous residues.

Senator Gaylord Nelson (Dem-Wis.), has called for a nationwide ban on the use of DDT and said he will introduce legislation to ban the interstate sale or shipment of the pesticide.

RUNOFF

DDT reaches the sea by runoff from streams and by winds that pick up the poisonous organic molecules from soil and cropland on all the continents.

Its menace may not be limited solely to creatures in the sea and the wildfowl who live off them.

St. Mary's College biologist Dr. Lawrence Cory reported January 24 that he found DDT in frogs and fish in remote high Sierra lakes. Dr. Cory also warned the chemical may be causing widespread genetic damage to insects.

Our Correspondent



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