98-21B POULTRY DIGEST
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PCBs can stimulate selenium deficiency

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), an industrial chemical which caused problems in some poultry flocks in 1971 and 1972 when it contaminated feeds, can actually stimulate a selenium-vitamin E deficiency in chicks.

G. F. Combs, Jr., and M. L. Scott, Cornell University, fed chicks levels of 0 and 50 parts per million of PCBs and varying levels of vitamin E and selenium in their rations. (*Poultry Sci.* 54: 1152-1158, 1975).

The deficiency showed up as exudative diathesis, an abnormal accumulation of body fluid under the skin. The addition of PCBs increased the incidence of exudative diathesis.

It is theorized that PCBs affect the liver, causing it to produce enzymes which tie up absorbed selenium into compounds that are of limited biological usefulness. ■

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