Polychlorinated Biphenyl Pollution In Poultry Is Investigated by USDA

An investigation of the extent to which some poultry produced in the Southeast may be contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) is being made by the Department of Agriculture. Any poultry found to be contaminated will be withheld from the market, the department says. Evidence of possible contamination came to light last fortnight. According to USDA's Consumer & Marketing Service, a commercial poultry processor became alarmed when the hatchability of its breeder flocks was sharply reduced.

The company traced the cause to a fishmeal ingredient sold by a Wilmington, N.C., firm. One of the systems used to process the meal was leaking a heat exchange fluid, which contained the PCBs. The fluid dripped directly into the meal, officials say.

Poultry Meal Ingredient

Fishmeal is a common ingredient in poultry feed.

The mill closed voluntarily July 16. Food & Drug Administration compiled a list of purchasers of the meal since April 30 and gave USDA a copy of the list. USDA is now contacting the feed mills and poultry processors who may be using this fish meal in poultry feed.

Immediate corrective action will be taken where necessary, it is stated. Poultry will be tested before slaughter and poultry found to be unfit for human consumption will be destroyed.

It was reported last week that at least 77,000 broiler chickens were destroyed by a packing company at Wilkesboro, N.C., after tests showed some of them had been contaminated by PCB.

The chemical was found in autopsies on chickens from flocks raised for Holly Farms Industries, of Wilkesboro, according to Dr. Kenneth May, the company's director of research and quality assurance.

MONS 031913