

FDA Plans Limit on New Toxin Threat

Substance Is
Similar to DDT

Indiana Firms
Face Charges

BY JOHN MACLEAN

(Chicago Tribune Staff Writer)
WASHINGTON, Feb. 12—Before Summer, the Food and Drug Administration will set a tolerance level for a new environmental threat called PCB, a substance similar to DDT in structure, it has been learned.

Dr. Charles C. Edwards, commissioner of the FDA, said in an interview that the level probably will be 5 parts per million (p.p.m.) in food. This is two parts below the current level of tolerance for DDT in beef cattle.

The proper name of PCB is polychlorinated biphenyl.

Used in Manufacturing

PCBs are widely used industrial compounds marketed in the United States under the trade name Aroclor. PCBs are used in the manufacture of paint, plastics and pesticides. PCB residue has been found in fish and wildlife tissues in this country and in Europe.

"This is a new and separate variation of the DDT story," said Richard Ronk, head of the FDA guidelines section.

The FDA is conducting a study of PCBs to discover how toxic they are.

Not as Widespread

"PCBs are not as widespread as DDT, and they may not be as toxic," Ronk said. In cases of acute poisoning they appear as toxic as DDT, he added.

"The unanswered question is whether they take a part in chromosome breaks and that is what we're trying to determine," Ronk said.

Two other developments in the PCB story are occurring right now:

1. The Department of Agriculture is testing poultry nationwide for PCBs.

2. Scientists have found PCBs have been mistaken for DDT

BY CASEY DUNNO

(Environment Editor)
The United States government filed pollution charges yesterday against two East Chicago companies, based on evidence gathered by a citizen environmental action group.

It is the first time such charges have been filed against a major industry in northeastern Indiana as a result of citizen action.

John F. Flynn, assistant United States attorney, filed criminal informations against Blaw-Knox Co., 141th street and Railroad avenue, East Chicago, and the Mohl Oil Corp., refinery, 1221 Indianapolis blvd., East Chicago.

Violate 1899 Act

The companies are charged with violating the 1899 Rivers and Harbors Act by polluting the Indian harbor canal without a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers.

Photographs and water samples of the pollution were collected April 11, 1976, by persons who later formed the Independent Citizens Water Pollution Research, Inc., a non-profit corporation consisting of 12 members who live in Hammond, Crown Point, and Highland, Ind.

It is obvious there are serious cases of pollution in Indiana, and it is obvious the county and the state have done little about it," said William Walden Jr., 24, of 3339 Greenbrier Lane, Hammond, president of the citizen group.

Others Help in Others

The group was formed in June, 1976, to provide an agency where citizens can get help in scientific analysis of pollution samples.

"We're offering an alternative to existing regulatory agencies," said Walden. "Citizens feel no satisfaction going through agencies. We are

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and are reviewing data on the presence of DDT.

3. Other studies are under way by the government and private industry into the toxic effects of PCBs.

The FDA action has been prompted in part by the finding of high levels of PCBs in 125,000 chickens from the state of New York last month.

Prompt National Check

This find by the Department of Agriculture has prompted the nationwide check. So far, PCBs have not turned up in high-level quantities in other places.

In New York, the levels found in testing ranged from 0.5 p.p.m. to 30 p.p.m. The Agriculture Department immediately asked the FDA for a tolerance level. It was agreed 5 p.p.m. would be taken as a temporary-action level.

"We definitely feel this was an isolated case and anything on the market is probably good," said Dr. Kenneth McEwen, deputy administrator of the Agriculture Department's meat and poultry inspection division.

The chickens involved in the New York case have been impounded by their purchaser, the Campbell Soup co.

Could Occur in Storage

Government scientists hazarded a guess that the incident may have been caused by exposure of the chickens' feed to paint containing PCBs, which could occur in a storage bin.

In addition to wear and weathering of product, containing PCBs, scientists say PCBs are spread thruout the environment by industrial wastes and by burning trash which contains PCBs on city dumps.

Both PCB and DDT appear at the same point in spec-

graphs, the method used to determine the makeup of animal tissue. Until a year ago, it appears, DDT and PCB amounts were added together and given as amounts of DDT.

The first systematic work in U. S. to differentiate between DDT and PCB was done at the Patuxent Wildlife Research center in Laurel, MD., a laboratory of the Interior Department's bureau of sport fisheries and wildlife.

Mistaken for DDT

A study published there last March showed how PCB had been mistaken for DDT in two bald eagle carcasses. Bald eagles found dead are sent to Patuxent for analysis.

The impetus for the Patuxent study was a report by European scientists in 1967 disclosing PCP in wildlife tissues.

A separate study of the effects of PCB on fish is under way by the fish and wildlife service at the Fish-Pathology Research Laboratory in Columbia, Mo.

50 PER CENT DIE

One test showed that 50 per cent of a study group of catfish died within 10 days when kept in water with 10 micrograms per liter of a PCB formulation.

Swedish research workers have shown that as many as 114 different PCBs are possible.

The sole U. S. manufacturer, Monsanto Co., has agreed with the government in the future it will sell PCBs only for use in closed systems, such as electrical transformers.