PCB FOUND IN MAJORITY OF PAPERBOARD SAMPLES ANALYZED BY FDA

Polychlorinated biphenyls were found in the vast majority of paperboard samples analyzed by the Food and Drug Administration in a 1974 survey, but the level of PCB's dropped substantially from findings in a 1972 FDA survey (See FOOD CHEMICAL NEWS, April 28, Page 5).

FDA conducted the fiscal 1974 survey to remove any products from the market which exceeded the tolerance of 10 p.p.m. PCB in paper food packaging material and to examine the progress made by the paperboard industry in lowering PCB content. The 22 FDA Field Offices were told to collect 5 samples of recently manufactured domestic foods packaged in direct contact with greyboard, recycled paper known to be the source of PCB contamination. Actually, 115 samples were analyzed for the survey.

Only 1 of 115 greyboard samples was found to exceed 10 p.p.m. PCB's were detected in 72% of the samples, but that was a drop from 92% in 1972. FDA reported a reduction by a whole order of magnitude in average levels with the fiscal 1974 level of 1.4 p.p.m. compared to 15.3 p.p.m. in fiscal 1972.

There was also a marked decline in the contamination of infant cereal packaging, according to the FDA figures. The rate of incidence declined from nearly 100% in 1972 to 29% in 1974, and average levels decreased from 5.2 p.p.m. to 1.7 p.p.m.

FDA found that the results of the survey agreed closely with the findings reported by the Boxboard Research and Development Association under a Cooperative Quality Assurance agreement with FDA (See FOOD CHEMICAL NEWS, Feb. 11, 1974, Page 22).

FDA could not seize the lot from which the one violative sample was taken because the entire lot was marketed before the results of the survey were complete.

FDA concluded that "the continued high rate of PCB occurrence in greyboard, coupled with the occasional high finding necessitate continued monitoring by industry with appropriate checking by FDA."

Continued Monitoring for PCB's Planned by FDA

FDA said it will continue to monitor for PCB's in the ongoing total diet studies and pesticides in foods surveillance program. In light of the significant decline in PCB incidence, the agency predicted that monitoring may be relaxed at some time in the future "unless new health-hazard data are developed."

FDA is currently surveying imported food packaged in paperboard for PCB contamination.

FDA recently framed the issues which will be considered at a public hearing on objections to FDA's §406 "poisonous and deleterious substance" tolerance of 10 p.p.m. for PCBs in food-packaging paper and paperboard (See FOOD CHEMICAL NEWS, March 17, Page 29).

A number of requests to participate in the hearing have been filed (See FOOD CHEMICAL NEWS, April 21, Page 2).

DSW 318769