INDUSTRY TASK FORCE FOR DDT
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS ASSOCIATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE :

Madison, Wis. May 8 -- Scientific fact today laid to rest a widespread misconception that DDT remains permanently in the environment. "I know of no natural situation where DDT is not degraded, " Dr. Paul E. Porter, an associate member and consultant to pesticide commissions of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, advised at the Wisconsin Natural Resources Department DDT hearings here. In addition, Porter said DDT does not build up in plant life, soil water, fish, or mammals, beyond a naturally reversible plateau. When this level is reached, he said, it remains balanced between intake and dissipation.

He said DDT is broken down by nature in soil and degraded to far less toxic compounds by the action of micro-organisms present. On vegetation it is broken down by sunlight and is additionally dispersed by rain and evaporation. When DDT is applied to growing crops, it undergoes a period of rapid decline, covering from two to forty days. Since DDT adheres to soil particles it is not readily moved by water, making the compound relatively stable, he advised. However, what remains of DDT and its metabolites disappears at an approximate rate of 20% per year, regardless of concentration.

In streams, lakes, and ocean waters, DDT and its metabolite DDE are absorbed on matter which is present, with a considerable portion sinking to muddy water beds. In sludges, Porter explained, there is a likelihood that DDT is degraded by micro-organisms with the result that it will not accumulate indefinitely in the water.

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In mammals and birds, studies reported degradation of DDT through internal chemical action and excretion. A portion of the chemical components are stored in the fat, but here again a stored level is reached, Porter testified, with no additional build-up of DDT residues in the animal.

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