ST. L. POST DISPATCH 2/25/72 PCB Article

Many Chi kens Contaminat d By Chemical

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25 (UPI)—Contamination of thousands of chickens by an industrial chemical called PCB has been found in Maine, the Department of Agriculture announced yesterday.

Officials said PCB contamination was confirmed last weekend in 10 lots of slaughtered broiler and roaster chickens in plants at Belfast and Waterville, Me. The 10 lots contained 200,000 birds.

The chickens have been impounded under Government supervision. An Agriculture Department spokesman said he would not rule out the possibility that contaminated chickens had reached consumers, but he said there was no indication that this had happened.

Spokesmen said a series of precautionary steps was ordered to screen contaminated poultry. Preliminary findings indicated that the source of the contamination was a single day's production of feed from an unnamed mill, the Government said.

Chickens from 100 farms that sometimes use the feed, including the 10 farms where the contaminated birds were found, are being tested before slaughter to screen out any containing excess PCB.

All poultry produced in Maine is being tested for PCB residue on a sampling basis after slaughter but before sale.

PCB, used in industrial equipment, is a chlorinated hydrocarbon similar to DDT. The PCB chemicals have been linked with skin irritations in humans and liver damage and birth defects in laboratory animals.

Federal guidelines consider PCB residues of up to 5 parts a million in poultry fat as safe for human consumption but ban sale of poultry with residues above that level.

There were several similar incidents of PCB contamination of chickens, eggs and turkeys last year in the Southeast and in Minnesota.

(James O. Gesling of the Food and Drug Administration's Bureau of Veterinary Medicine said that Ralston Purina Co. of St. Louis had owned the three mills supplying feed for the chickens until about Feb. 5, when they were sold, apparently to local interests.

(Though the feed came from the mills, Gesling said, it appeared that the contamination did not occur there. Instead, he said, FDA officials and Ralston Purina were investigating the likelihood that the contamination occurred in one or more of the feed components produced elsewhere.

(Gesling said that the company had flown samples of the feed to St. Louis for analysis and that FDA was also conducting tests.

(Because some components, such as fish meal, were produced outside the United States, officials were unable to say whether the PCB contamination occurred in this country. The only United States producer of PCB is Monsanto Co. of St. Louis. However, there are foreign manufacturers of the chemical.)

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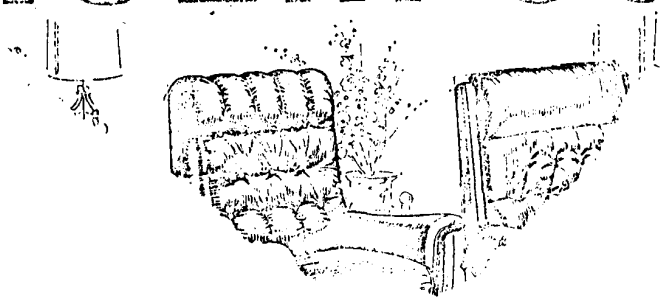

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