Worth Considering

Here's one to consider thoughtfully and I'm frank to admit I'm not sure at all what the ramifications of it may be. Prof. Milton L. Scott at the NY State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell, said that combinations of DDT and DDE, a biological breakdown product of DDT, at concentrations up to 100 parts per million (ppm) have no adverse effect on eggshell quality in laying hens and quail. On the other hand, organic mercury (methyl mercury chloride) at the level of 10 ppm has a major effect on egg production, eggshell quality, body weight, egg weight, fertility, and hatchability. The damages begin to show up in two weeks. Elaborating on the implications of his findings, Scott said that methyl mercury may be more important than DDT, DDE, and PCB's in causing reproductive problems in certain species of wild birds. "It appears possible that thinning of eggshells observed in eagles, ospreys, pelicans, and peregrine falcons may be due, in large part, to the consumption of methyl mercury even though DDT has been claimed to be the major cause," Scott said. This is worrisome news. DDT we've been able to control principally by stopping its use but insofar as organic mercury is concerned, we're not even sure where it's all coming from!

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