

FDA Will Set Limit on Toxin

Substance Is
Similar to DDT

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 five parts per million (p.p.m.) in food. This is two parts below the current level



Dr. Charles Edwards

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 Arclor. 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 Runk, 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," Runk said. In case 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 are trying to determine," Runk said.

These 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 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

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prompted in part by the finding of high levels of PCBs in 120,000 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 0.6 p.p.m. to 30 p.p.m. The Agriculture Department immediately asked the FDA for a tolerance level. It was agreed 8 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 im-

pounded by their purchaser, the Campbell Soup Co.

Could Occur in Storage
Government scientists have made 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 products containing PCBs, scientists say PCBs are spread through 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 spectrographs, 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.

Mistake for 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.

A study published there last

March showed how PCB been mistaken for DDT in bald eagle carcasses, eagles found dead are so Patuxent for analysis.

The impetus for the Patuxent study was a report European scientists in 1970 closing PCB in wildlife tin.

A separate study of the facts of PCB on fish is underway by the Fish and Wildlife Service at the Fish-Feed Research Laboratory in Columbia, Mo.

10 Per Cent Die
One test showed that 10 percent of a study group of fish died within 16 days kept in water with 10 mg grams per liter of a PCB solution.

Swedish research war have shown that as many 116 different PCBs are able.

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

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