-FDA SAYS RALSTON PURINA
DISTRIBUTED CONTAMINATED MEAL

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WASHN -AP- THE FDA SAID THOUSANDS OF CHICKENS HAVE BEEN DESTROYED AND MANY MORE MAY BE BECAUSE A RALSTON PURINA SUBSIDIARY HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTING CONTAMINATED ANIMAL MEAL FOR THE PAST YEAR.

THE FEED WAS CONTAMINATED BY POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS DURING A WAREHOUSE FIRE IN PUERTO RICO A YEAR AGO SAID NANCY GLICK A SPOKESWOMAN FOR THE FDA. BUT THE FDA LEARNED OF IT ONLY RECENTLY.

SHE SAID THE CONTAMINATED FISH MEAL MAY HAVE BEEN MIXED IN SWINE OR OTHER ANIMAL FEEDS IN ADDITION TO POULTRY FEED AND THE FDA DOES NOT YET KNOW IF ANY PET FOOD IS INVOLVED.

MOST OF THE CONTAMINATED FEED APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN SHIPPED TO TEXAS ALTHOUGH AT LEAST SOME HAS TURNED UP IN IDAHO AND ARKANSAS GLICK SAID.

'WE DON'T KNOW HOW MANY CHICKENS OR EGGS WERE SOLD BEFORE IT WAS DISCOVERED' SHE SAID. 'WE KNOW SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND CHICKENS CONTAINING EXCESSIVE PCB LEVELS HAVE HAD TO BE DESTROYED AND EGGS FROM CONTAMINATED LAYING HENS ARE BEING DESTROYED DAILY.'

POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS ARE HIGHLY STABLE CHEMICALS THAT WERE USED EXTENSIVELY FOR MANY YEARS IN INSULATORS AND OTHER ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT. AS A RESULT OF THEIR HEAVY INDUSTRIAL USE THEY HAVE BECOME PERSISTENT ENVIRONMENT CONTAMINANTS THAT GET INTO THE FOOD CHAIN AND TURN UP IN THE FAT TISSUES OF MANY ANIMALS ESPECIALLY FISH.

CONSUMPTION OF LARGE DOESES BY HUMANS CAN CAUSE ACNE-LIKE SKIN ERUPTIONS DARKENING OF THE SKIN AND NAILS EXCESSIVE DISCHARGE FROM THE EYES AND SWELLING OF THE EYELIDS THE FDA SPOKESWOMAN SAID. BUT SUCH SYMPTOMS SHOULD NOT BE EXPERIENCED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE CONSUMED THE CONTAMINANTS IN THE QUANTITIES FOUND IN POULTRY AND EGGS SO FAR SHE SAID.

THE FDA SAYS IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ELIMINATE PCBS FROM ALL FOODS BECAUSE THEY OCCUR THROUGHOUT THE ENVIRONMENT BUT IT HAS SET MAXIMUM TOLERANCE LEVELS AT VARIOUS POINTS IN THE FOOD CHAIN.

FINISHED ANIMAL FEED MAY NOT CONTAIN MORE THAN 0.2 PARTS PER MILLION OF THE CONTAMINANT WHILE ANIMAL FEED COMPONENTS MAY CONTAIN UP TO TWO PARTS PER MILLION.

FDA INVESTIGATORS SAID ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE FEED SHOWED LEVELS UP TO 62 PARTS PER MILLION MORE THAN 30 TIMES THE PERMISSIBLE LEVEL.

THE FDA SAID THE MEAL WAS MANUFACTURED BY THE VAN CAMP DIVISION OF NATIONAL PACKING CO. A SUBSIDIARY OF THE RALSTON PURINA CO.
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