

Farmers start legal action for compensation against waste disposal firm

A HIGHLY toxic chemical which can build up in the body like DDT is leaking on to farmland in South Wales from two former chemical dumps.

The dumps, at Maendy Quarry, Llantwit Fardre and Brofakin Quarry, Gwent, were featured in a *Western Mail* investigation in January 1971, which first revealed the leakage of chemicals.

Now one of the chemicals has been identified as one of the polychlorinated biphenyl group.

The chemical, manufactured by Monsanto Chemicals at Newport and dumped in the quarries between 1966 and 1970, degrades very slowly and can build up in animal tissue until dangerous or possibly lethal concentrations are reached.

The American Environmental Protection Agency has set up a maximum guideline of two parts per billion PCB for unfiltered water and 50 PPB in animal tissue.

Farmers whose land adjoins both quarries—Mr. Owlin M'ha, at Brofakin, and Mr. Bill Maldment at Maendy, have both lost stock and believe PCB contributed to the deaths.

Analysis

The chemical was dumped at the sites before anyone was aware of its dangerous properties by Industrial Waste Disposal (South Wales) Limited, now part of the Redland Purle Group.

A Welsh Office spokesman said last night the Government had been examining the situation at both dumps for some time and had arranged for an analysis of the water in the area.

"It is stressed that there is no danger to public health in the situation as no public water supplies are affected."

Both farmers are beginning legal actions against Redland Purle for compensation and the actions are being handled by Cardiff solicitor Mr. Robin Geidard.

Mr. Geidard said last night samples from a calf which died at Brofakin Farm were sent to America for analysis.

"The results showed very high concentrations of PCB in the brain, liver and fat."

"In the sort of concentration present, PCB would have caused sterility and considerably reduced resistance to other toxins to the point where a very small dose of

Farmland being poisoned by killer chemical

some other substance, normally not dangerous, could be fatal."

"In Mr. Maldment's case all the land on the side of the road which includes the quarry is either directly or indirectly affected by pollution."

"The chemicals have polluted the land and a stream making a wide band of unusable land through that part of the farm. This means that cattle cannot be grazed near the stream and they cannot be taken across to the other part of the land in case they drink the water as they go."

Mr. Maldment said last night 46 acres of his 63-acre farm which he rents from Giamorgan County Council were directly or indirectly affected by the leakage.

Survey

"As well as PCB, I am told the levels of lead and cadmium are much higher than normal there," he said.

"This business is taking away my livelihood. It has got to be settled soon."

The law relating to the disposal of toxic waste was tightened up last year with the introduction of the Deposition of Business Waste Act 1972.

At the same time a survey was commissioned of all tips in England and Wales. There are believed to be about 40 of these and the results of the survey will be sent to the river authorities of the areas involved and the Institute of Geological Sciences.

But while the survey is going on the Environment Department is making a rush survey of 13 of them — seven, including Maendy and Brofakin, in Giamorgan.

An article in yesterday's *Sunday Times* said the Maendy tip was the worst known to the Government which has ordered a special £20,000 investigation into what is buried there.

Sludge

The article claimed the quarry was known to contain at least 31 contaminants of which five were rated very toxic, nine as toxic and three as mildly toxic.

Yesterday, a *Western Mail* reporter who visited the tip, saw pools of water and chemical sludge in one corner.

Unidentifiable chemicals were scattered over the ground or spilling from corroded metal drums half buried in rubble.

The lettering on most of the drums was unrecognisable but one bore a label marked "CAUTION" — This slowly gives off an inflammable vapour that is heavier than air."

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Decaying drums of chemicals leak their contents into pools of discoloured water on the tip.



Farmer Bill Maidment on his Upper Church Village farm, 17 acres of which have been declared unfit for farming.



Rotting drums of a chemical called Montopore among the rubble.