Chain Of Contamination By PCB Found In Foods

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Health inspectors said Friday they expect to find more contamination from the banned chemical PCB, which already has been found in meat meal in Montana, chickens and eggs in Idaho, bakery goods in Utah and chicken parts in Iowa and Minnesota.

The contaminated food was being destroyed, including more than 350,000 chickens at farms in Idaho and Utah, a million eggs, and 75,000 frozen cakes.

In Butterfield, Minn., a hold was placed on 35,000 pounds of chicken intended for use by Campbell's Soup Co., a U.S. Food and Drug Administration spokesman said late Friday.

Officials were also checking for possible contamination in animal feed sent to Washington, Oregon and South and North Dakota, said Leroy Gomez, FDA director for the region based in Denver.

He said some contaminated eggs or chickens could still be on the market, but that the levels were low and did not pose a serious health hazard.

PCB — polychlorinated biphenyl — has caused cancer in laboratory tests, killed cattle in Kansas and caused skin diseases in humans in Japan. The current contamination was first reported to federal officials Aug. 30, Gomez said.

Idaho Gov. John Evans criticized the FDA Friday for not disclosing the problem until this week. The problem came to light when an Idaho hatchery began destroying its more than 300,000 laying hens.

(See PCB: A-3, Col. 1)

GDN 9/15/79

PCB-ARCH-EXT0378546

GDN 9/15/79

PCB Contamination Found In Foods

From A-1

Ed Gallagher, Idaho state health officer, said that for someone to be seriously affected by the PCB levels found in eggs from an Idaho plant he would have to eat a dozen eggs a day for 45 days.

But Mike Williams, chief regional inspector for the FDA in Seattle, said officials were still concerned about long-term exposure to contaminated eggs that might be used in a variety of foods.

"We're trying to get them off the market as quickly as we possibly can," he said.

"I think the contamination is going to be widespread, much more than we thought at first," Williams said.

The oily synthetic chemical, used as a coolant in transformers and other electrical equipment, was outlawed five years ago, but is found in older machinery, including some used on farms.

More than 300,000 laying hens and a million eggs were being destroyed at the Ritewood Egg Co. in Franklin, Idaho. The contamination first showed up in Ritewood's eggs and chickens.

A Pepperidge Farms factory in Richmond, Utah, said it had found traces of PCB in 75,000 frozen cakes and that they would be destroyed.

The company received a tank of cracked eggs from Ritewood, Williams said. Pepperidge Farms' Utah manager, Dudley Parham, said the company was awaiting a government go-ahead to destroy its cakes baked with Ritewood eggs.

"Only a trace of PCB was found," he said, "but as far as we're concerned, if any is found, we're going to destroy it."

The cakes, boxed six to a carton, were roped off in the company's freezers and labled with large "hold" signs.

A Swift and Co. plant in Clinton, Iowa, was preparing to destroy meat from 28,000 chickens that originated at Ritewood.

Bill Dillman, a Swift spokesman in Chicago, said "out-of-tolerance" levels of PCB were found in meat that had been cooked and cut up for meat pies and other products at the Clinton plant.

He said none of the contaminated meat had left custody of Swift and all of it would be destroyed.

The chain of contamination has so far been traced back to a hog processor, Pierce Packing Co., in Billings, Mont., said Gomez.

Inspectors were at the plant Friday, searching for the source of the contamination.

Ken Poggi, president of Pierce Packing, said the contamination would have involved one or two truckloads of bone and meat meal shipped from his plant. He said it was possible it became contaminated after it left the company.

PCB Level In Wildlife High

RALEIGH (AP) — Doves and rabbits taken nea roadsides where PCB was dumped last summer coi tained up to 19 times more of the toxic chemical tha allowed for human consumption, the state Wildlife Re sources Commission said Friday.

The animals were trapped or killed for testin shortly after PCB-laced oil was dumped illegally alon 210 miles of North Carolina highways. Rabbits an doves, the only animals tested, were taken from dis tricts which include the entire 210 miles of roadsides

Staff biologists believe wildlife will continue to pic up PCB in the spill areas, "although not in as high a concentration as when the spill first occurred," said a commission spokesman.

PCB-ARCH-EXT0378547