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TROUT

NEWSCASTER: A heavy concentration of contaminants has been found in trout in an upstate New York lake. WINS Science Specialist Roger Field reports.

ROGER FIELD: Well, we've got another fishy one for you. A team of four scientists reports that the trout they pulled from Cayuga Lake in upstate New York contains PCB, a DDT-like contaminant known technically as Polychlorinated biphenol. The scientists say that the actual levels range from about half a part per million of PCB to more than twenty-six parts per million. And they believe the variation may be related somewhat to the age of the trout since the younger trout tended to have less PCB than some of the older ones.

Now this announcement should hardly come as a surprise to those who remember the findings reported last August of scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey. After testing some two thousand samples of water from rivers and lakes around the country, they concluded that many lakes and rivers contained concentrations of PCBs, especially in the bottom sediment. In all, the geologigal survey scientists found concentrations ranging from ten to four hundred times the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended limits for PCB.

Some twenty states were named as sources of PCB contaminated lake and river water and New York was among those twenty. But in this latest report on trout, the scientists were not sure where the Cayuga trout were getting their PCBs. They do note considerable variation in PCB levels among the older trout and this variation may be due to differences in eating habits, metabolism or ability to excrete the contaminant.

When a trout eventually joins the list of fish that at one time or another were banned or dumped because of the contamination problem has yet to be seen. The first thing to check is whether the PCB problem in trout extends beyond the borders of Cayuga Lake and eventually, it would be nice to know how the industrial chemical PCB is getting into the environment to a degree that has been previously unsuspected.

This is Roger Field.