

March 27, 1948

Mr. Manfred Bowditch,
c/o Lead Industries Association,
420 Lexington Avenue,
New York City 17.

Dear Manfred:

My failure to reply earlier to your letter of March 2 concerning the poisoning of cattle was due to the fact that I have been on the West Coast for the past two weeks. I now hasten to reply and to return to you the reprint in accordance with your request. The article in question is by no means a bad or unreasonable publication. There is little other material available in the literature on the subject, although there are scattered notations and references here and there to lead poisoning in cattle. The diagnosis is not easily made, and moreover there is not very much information which would enable one to say with any great certainty what are the normal values for lead in the tissues of animals raised under a variety of conditions in a variety of areas in the United States. Moreover, the authors in this case draw somewhat more extensive conclusions from their analytical data than would be fully justified in my opinion. Their statement that certain concentrations of lead in the liver may be regarded as lethal is not very realistic. Actually there is no concentration of lead in the liver or in other tissues in the body that can be used as a basis for determining the cause of death. One would have to exercise even more reservation here than in the case of a human being, and all that could be said in any instance is that the extent of the exposure to lead can be estimated on the basis of accurate analytical data. Whether or not any sickness accompanied the absorption must be determined in every case by appropriate clinical methods. That is to say that animals may survive, and be without any apparent illness, despite the presence in their tissues of highly abnormal quantities of lead. It seems quite impossible to get this idea through the heads of people.

Despite the criticisms of certain details above, the article, I repeat, is a reasonable one, and there is no very serious question that animals, including cattle, take in considerable quantities of lead from time to time by reason of the types of exposure described. In my opinion the cattle lick fences, buildings and the like, not because of any "craving for lead," but rather because of the oils, traces of which are present even after considerable drying. I have seen cattle licking a red barn painted with Venetian Red mixed into linseed oil, until practically all of the paint was removed from the area within their reach. It is also true that cattle, like other pent-up animals will try out practically anything. How much of this is curiosity, how much of it is some special flavor, how much

KE 0014709

Mr. Manfred Bowditch - (2) - March 27, 1948

of it is just plain boredom among apparently contented animals and how much is the cussedness of ^{animate and} inanimate objects is beyond my scope, but I should be prepared to say that the authors are rather naive in their belief that any animal likes lead.

If you want my opinion, I should say that very little could be done about this situation. On the other hand, I should be interested in anything that you find out about it should you choose to look into it further.

Sincerely yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

FAK er

Enc.

KE 0014710