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POULTRY: THREE-PART TESTING PROGRAM FOR PCB ANNOUNCED BY AGRICULTURE DEPT.

As an added assurance to consumers, the Department of Agriculture is increasing the testing for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) in certain types of poultry.

The residue problem arose when the PCB chemical leaked into fish meal being pasteurized at the East Coast Terminal, Inc., in Wilmington, N.C. The fish meal was distributed in a 10-state area.

Effective immediately, all lots of commercial laying hens, breeder hens, and turkeys originating in the 10 states will be sampled before slaughter. Broilers will not be affected, since tests to date have not shown PCB levels in broilers to be above established tolerances.

USDA said the three-part control program will work as follows: Any producer of the specified types of poultry can present an affidavit with the poultry he brings for slaughter, stating that they were not fed any of the contaminated fish meal. The poultry may then be slaughtered and marketed, subject to sample testing by USDA.

Any producer can have his poultry tested at his own expense by a private laboratory, and submit a laboratory certificate with each lot of poultry sold for slaughter, showing what levels, if any, of PCB the poultry contain. Identical samples will be submitted to the USDA laboratories. If levels are below the acceptable limits, such lots of poultry can also be slaughtered and marketed.

Any poultry of the specified types that comes to market without either a written affidavit or a private laboratory certificate must be held in cold storage after slaughter until samples can be tested by or under the supervision of USDA.

USDA will be responsible for check-testing the poultry submitted with affidavits or private laboratory certificates, and if the check-tests show PCB exceeding the acceptable levels, all subsequent lots of poultry from the same farms will have to be held live on the farms or retained after slaughter until the government can complete tests on them.

Poultry found to contain unacceptable quantities of PCB's will be destroyed for human food.

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