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PCB in Yard Shocks Family

LAFAYETTE, Colo. (AP)—Wayne and Marie Darling say they were "devastated" to learn they have lived more than five years next to 17 barrels of the toxic, cancer-causing chemical PCB—at least one of which is leaking.

"We've been living here in the country, trying to live clean, healthy lives and here we have the most horrible thing in the world in our backyard," Mrs. Darling sobbed Saturday during a telephone interview.

She was waiting for results of tests that would determine whether her breast milk contained more than natural background levels of the chemical.

Her son, Matthew, will be one year old on Friday and she said her "first thought when all this started was for my baby, what may have happened to him."

On Friday, regional Environmental Protection Agency officials found that the soil around the barrels, stacked by a barn, was contaminated with PCB.

PCB—polychlorinatedbiphenol—is considered dangerous in small quantities and is known to cause skin and liver damage, cancer, fetal deformaties, and even death.

Made for use as an insulator and coolant in electrical equipment, such as large transformers, PCB was banned earlier this year by the EPA.

The Darlings raise chickens on the land they rent, eating some of the eggs and giving some to friends. The chickens roamed the area freely and the birds and eggs also are being tested for PCB contamination.

Investigators learned the barrels were placed on the property by a relative of the owner, who thought they contained cooking oil and was going to use the oil to weatherize fences.

Darling, a self-employed auto mechanic, said that a few years ago he wrote the manufacturer, Monsanto Chemical Corp. of St. Louis, and asked what the PCB could be used for.

Darling said "a man who said he was a salesman called me back and said the barrels contained a dangerous chemical," so he did not disturb them. David Wood of Monsanto said Saturday that the company has not been able to find any record of contact with Darling.