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Chemical Tested

Embryo Deaths Laid to PCB

NEW YORK (AP) — The industrial chemical PCB has produced death of embryos and birth defects in laboratory animal experiments, a government biologist reported today.

Dr. Helene C. Cecil of the U.S. Department of Agriculture said that 70 per cent of white leghorn chickens fed moderate levels of PCBs produced embryos that failed to hatch.

And of the chick embryos that failed to hatch, 84 per cent had birth defects, Dr. Cecil told the 164th national meeting of the American Chemical Society.

Dr. Cecil described the research as one of only a few controlled studies of the effects of PCBs. Her report followed one yesterday on the discovery of the chemical in human tissue.

PCB, while not a pesticide, is chemically similar to DDT. It has found its way into the environment, into marine and animal life, and it has been detected in some drinking water in New York State, and in arctic polar bears.

Scientists at the chemical society meeting said PCB has been put to such uses as a liquid for transformers, as a lubricant, as a paint additive, in hydraullic fluid, and carbonless carbon paper and probably in other areas not widely known. The chemical is highly resistant to heat.

Dr. Cecil told newsmen there was still a possibility that some contaminant in PCB could be causing the problems rather than the chemical compound itself, and that this has to be determined conclusively.

There were no effects on the laying hens as to body weight, mortality, fertility or on egg weight and egg shell thickness.

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