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MAY 4 1973

On the farm front

By BERNARD BRENNER
UPI Farm Editor

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Senate Agriculture Committee has tentatively approved an indemnity program for dairy farmers whose milk may become contaminated—through no fault of the farmer—with residues of a chlorinated hydrocarbon chemical called PCB.

The program, if approved by Congress, is expected to cost comparatively little. This is because sales of PCB for use in silo-sealing compounds on dairy farms were halted nearly three years ago by the sole U.S. manufacturer of the chemical, Monsanto Chemical Co. The material has not been available for use in silos since mid-1970.

Agriculture Department experts say problems growing out of use of PCB arose several years ago on scattered farms in a few states, including parts of Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. On these farms, a compound including PCB was applied to the inner walls of concrete silos before scientists discovered the chemical could migrate from the walls into the silage fed to dairy cows.

Several farmers in Ohio, as a result, were forced to halt marketing of their milk for a time until PCB residues dropped to within safe tolerance levels.

Because PCB is extremely long lasting, the National Milk Producers Federation pointed out that silos treated with the chemical before its use was halted could still contaminate feed in hhe future. The legislation pending in the Senate committee would not repay farmers for losses suffered in the past, but it would indemnify producers if PCB residues appear in their milk in the futuro.

MONS 064766