

*Inquiry - Dr L. C. Smith
Hamilton*

May 20, 1931

Mr. E. W. Webb,
Ethyl Gasoline Corp.,
Chrysler Bldg.,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Webb:

I must apologize for my long delay in answering your letter of May 8, in which you enclose an inquiry of Dr. L. C. Smith of Hamilton, Missouri. I am afraid I have allowed my correspondence to get a bit ahead of me in the past two weeks. I shall attempt to make amends.

It is my feeling that a reply to Dr. Smith should state that our observations up to the present do not indicate that any considerable quantity of lead gains entrance to the crank case oil (Dr. Edgar can give you detailed figures on this item which are more accurate than any I have available at present). I should give him the information he asks as to the type of lead which goes into Ethyl Gasoline.

It is quite clear that the animals will not have been poisoned by absorbing lead through the skin. It is not entirely certain that they may not eat and consequently absorb some quantity of lead as result of licking themselves and eating food contaminated with such crank case oil. On the other hand, it does not seem to me that the quantity of lead involved here is likely to produce serious damage. I should regard it necessary in order to arrive at a diagnosis as to what killed the animals, to make an autopsy upon the dead animals and to determine the cause of their death. It is much more likely that the animals died of infectious processes which are common to hogs. On the other hand, if they died of lead it should be reasonably easy to exclude the infectious conditions at autopsy, after which it would be possible to determine whether or not the animals died of lead poisoning by suitable analyses of their tissues.

So much above for your own information. In writing to Dr. Smith I think it would be best to say that there are good reasons for doubting that the animals in question died as result of the absorption of lead, first, because no appreciable quantity of tetraethyl lead is

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present in crank case oil, and secondly, because only very small quantities of any type of lead are present. I should consider it in order to inquire whether or not Dr. Smith has actually seen these animals in the course of his practice, or whether his information has come more or less from hearsay. That is to say, I would not place myself in the position of directly questioning his knowledge of the infectious diseases of hogs, but I would question the facts in the matter unless, indeed, he has actually seen animals which have sickened and died with no apparent other cause for their sickness and death.

I trust that what I have said may be of some value to you in replying to Dr. Smith.

Very truly yours,

RAK:EJ

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