State Studies Jerome Feed, Ag Secretary Attacks Handling

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has declined to disclose the name of an Idaho farm in which possibly PCB-contaminated feed was fed to stock pending outcome of tests.

The banned chemical PCB has been found in chickens, eggs, processed foods and feeds in 10 western states and traced to the Pierce Packing Co. in Billings, Mont., where company officials said it apparently came from a ruptured transformer.

LeRoy Gomez of Denver said the FDA traced a 48,000-pound feed shipment sent from Pierce Aug. 18 to a farm in Jerome County. He said half the feed had been fed to the stock and the rest was being held.

The Idaho Statesman said in this morning's edition that Mike Williams, FDA investigations supervisor for the Idaho region, said the name of the farm will not be released until tests results show PCB in the feed sent to the farm.

The newspaper also quoted Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Carol Tucker Foreman as saying USDA inspectors' handling of the PCB contamination was "slovenly and unacceptable" and that changes will be made in federal meat inspection "as a result of what we learned from this experience."

"I have asked the agency to begin drafting a statement after having reviewed all actions that should have taken place and all actions that did take place," she said.

Experts Tracing Contamination

SPOKANE (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration is testing samples of animal feed meal sold by two Spokane companies, looking for any possible contamination by PCB, a toxic chemical banned by the federal agency five years ago, officials said.

Terry Conder of the FDA office here said Tuesday that about 100,000 pounds of the feed in question has been distributed throughout Eastern Washington and northern Idaho.

The FDA is testing samples sold by Ralston Purina Co. and Coast Trading Co. Inc.

"But we just don't know yet if the feed is contaminated," he said.

PCB was banned after it was learned the chemical caused liver tumors in test animals and chemical acne in humans. The chemical has been used as a coolant for electrical equipment.

Investigators have traced the contamination to the Pierce Packing Co. of Billings, Mont., where company officials said a backup transformer apparently leaked PCB Tinto the plant's meal production operation. The meal is used in making animal feed.

Pierce has distributed the meal in at least nine western states, including Washington and Idaho, officials have said.

Wyoming Buys Up Import Eggs

POWELL, Wyo. (AP) — "Imported" California eggs are selling like hotcakes in northern Wyoming this week after some supermarkets pulled Montana eggs off their shelves because of a contamination scare.

Darlene Trebesch of the Safeway store in Powell said $208 worth of eggs were taken off the shelves this week after eggs containing traces of the chemical PCB were found in Idaho.

The cancer-causing chemical was traced back to chicken feed produced at a Billings, Mont., packing house. "Meat meal" feeds from Pierce Packing Co. were used to feed chickens producing eggs for supermarkets in Wyoming and other states.

Federal officials say some of the feed was shipped to Utah, Idaho, Washington, Minnesota and North Dakota, but probably 90 percent was consumed within Montana.

Safeway stores in Powell, Buffalo, Greybull, Sheridan and Worland were thought to have eggs from Montana producers that used the feed, but only two — in Powell and Buffalo — said they had Montana eggs on their shelves when the possible contamination was discovered.

A Safeway spokesman in Buffalo said their store was nearly out of Butte eggs when the report was issued, and a Safeway employee in Greybull said, "We haven't been able to get the Butte ones."

In Worland, Safeway manager Dennis Shannon put a sign in his egg case telling customers the eggs were from California.

In Powell, Ms. Trebesch's new stock of California eggs was selling rapidly. "For about three hours yesterday I was out of them," she said.

She said she has had some inquiries from customers, but "they're pretty understanding."

Idaho Journal 9/19/75