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PCBs Have Effect on Monkeys

MADISON, Wis. (UPI) — Industrial pollutants called PCBs have toxic effects on monkeys when ingested in a steady diet at half the level allowed in some human foods, University of Wisconsin researchers reported Thursday.

James R. Allen, a Madison campus pathologist, said he and an assistant, D. A. Barsotti, found female monkeys were affected when fed a diet containing 2.5 parts per million (ppm) of PCBs.

He said effects included acne, hair loss, swollen eyelids and lips, enlarged livers, stomach ulcers and gastritis within one or two months. He said the monkeys also had lower conception rates than ormal.

The U. S. Food and Drug Administration has set tolerance limits for PCBs ranging from .1 ppm for infant and junior foods to 5 ppm for poultry and fish, he said.

"Man is not likely to consume 5 or 2.5 ppm of PCBs on a continuous basis," Allen said. "However, if he were to, there are strong indications that it would be toxic."

Allen said it also appears that PCBs are deposited in human fatty tissue and "there is a very distinct possibility that even at extremely low levels PCBs may eventually reach a toxic level in man."

PCBs—polychlorinated biphenyls—are chlorinated hydrocarbons like the insecticide DDT. They are used in a variety of products that include paints and adhesives.

Allen said the sole American manufacturer, Monsanto Chemicals Ltd., voluntarily cut back its sales in 1970, limiting them to important uses where the chemical can't reach the environment. But he said the chemical is still widely produced and sold in Europe and Japan.

PCBs have been traced to eggsbell thinning and weak, abnormal offspring in many bird species and were a reason for a 1971 ban in Wisconsin on taking of some Lake Michigan fish species, Allen said.

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