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Excess Toxic Chemicals In Carp Known Since '71

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (AP) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration says the largest fish wholesaler on Lake Pepin knew since January, 1971 that carp taken from the lake contained excessive amounts of an industrial chemical.

Darryle Brown, laboratory chief for the Minneapolis office of the FDA, said the agency has periodically inspected fish being shipped by Rudolph Hogue, owner of Lake Pepin Fisheries, Pepin.

Brown said a test by the FDA in January 1971 showed 40 parts per million (ppm) of polychlorinated biphenyl in fish which Hogue had taken from Lake Pepin. The federal limit on PCB is 5 ppm.

FDA tests in mid-1973 showed 10 and seven ppm of the chemical in the fish taken by Hogue, Brown said, and a July 1974 test showed 10 to 18 ppm.

Last month the FDA prevented the interstate shipping and sale of 30 tons of carp Hogue had taken mostly from Lake Pepin because of excessive levels of PCB.

Brown said the FDA had not acted earlier to stop the interstate sale of the fish because it had not been clear whether the agency had jurisdiction. However, he said the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in February that the FDA does have jurisdiction over such additives such as PCB, which are not intentionally added during processing of food.

Dr. Donald Mount, chairman of the Lake Michigan Toxic Substances Committee, said the committee has recommened to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that PCB's be limited to essential uses. The committee has representatives from Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan and the federal government.

Dr. James Allen, a University of Wisconsin pathologist, has conducted research which, he says, establishes that the chemical can cause birth defects or prevent reproduction in fish, birds and mammals. He says there is some evidence PCB's may have similar effects on human beings.

PCB's are a group of chemical compounds used in many industrial processes such as hydraulic fluid, heat transfer fluid and electrical insulators. It also is found in such products as inkind soaps. Monsanto Chemical Co., is the only U.S. manufacturer of the chemcial.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources said the PCB levels in Lake Michigan are alarming and says it also will push for a ban.

PCB's shave been found in fish in Lake Pepin and in Lake Superior.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Department of Health recommend that sport fishermen eat no more than one meal per week of fish caught in the Mississippi River from Minneapolis through Lake Pepin, Lake Michigan and Green Bay, and the Fox River from Portage north to the Columbia County line.

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