PCBs In Electric-Dishwashing Detergents

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By E. P. PORTER JR.
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

PCB, a widely used family of chemicals related to DDT and other so-called hard pesticides, have been discovered in electric-dishwashing detergents, two University of Wisconsin researchers reported last week.

The discovery was made by G. Fred Lee and Gilman Veith of the university's Water Chemistry Laboratory in Madison. The substance has been found in Electrasol and Finish, two dishwashing compounds produced by Economics Laboratory, St. Paul, Minn.

The finding was made in trying to trace the origin of PCB and other man-made chemicals in Lake Michigan. Although the concentrations in the lake are extremely small, they have been found to build up in the body fat of trout, salmon and other fish so that the concentration in the fish is sometimes 10,000 times that in the surrounding water.

Michigan authorities recently banned the taking of Coho salmon. The fish were found to contain 25 parts of PCB for every million parts of body fat. The Food and Drug Administration has given the state and the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

Coho were introduced to Lake Michigan about five years ago in an effort to create a sport fishery.

Lee and Veith emphasized that the PCB levels in the detergents were too low to present a health problem.

"PCB is a serious problem in the first instance it is desirable to look at it seriously in fish-eating birds," Veith said. "All we have to do is look and see what's happened to the eagle to see that."

Much of the killing of predatory birds formerly attributed to DDT has been shifted to PCB, he said.

PCB is a colorless fluid with an almost endless variety of uses, including plastic and paper manufacturing. It is used as an additive to pesticides to make them more persistent and as an insulator for electrical equipment. It is manufactured [illegible] in this country by [illegible] Chemical Co. [illegible] Kanegafuchi Chemical Co. [illegible] Japan.

[illegible] only.

About two years ago, Monsanto announced that it would market the product only for closed systems—that is, for uses where it would not escape to the environment.

Last month, however, after federal investigators found that PCB from cardboard containers had been absorbed in breakfast cereal, Monsanto acknowledged that it had continued to sell the substance up until April 1971.

The Wisconsin researchers expressed that not all the PCB in Lake Michigan could have originated with the two detergents. PCB has been found in sewage outfalls of small towns bordering the lake. These towns probably have few electric dishwashing machines, Lee said.

PCB, was first detected in Electrasol and Finish about a year ago, Lee said. The manufacturer was notified and promised to investigate. It was discovered again during a recheck last August, Lee said.

He said that he had asked Monsanto in check to see whether their other chemicals were tainted with PCB.

A Monsanto spokesman said, "We really do not have a lot of information on this incident. We can only make a guess, admittedly a guess. The PCBs probably stem from the packaging material, which in turn, we assume, is brought made of recycled paper [illegible] have rubbish [illegible] stiff in the [illegible]

"There [illegible]

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