

May 5, 1949

Mr. Manfred Bowditch,
Director of Health and Safety,
Lead Industries Association,
420 Lexington Avenue,
New York City 17.

Dear Manfred:

In response to your letter of April 23 and its question I am glad to point out that the statement made on the authority of Doctor Bailey in the May issue of the Farm Journal is substantially incorrect. It is quite true that the crank-case oil from engines using leaded gasoline has lead in it. In general, however, the lead derived from the fuel has been decomposed and exists in inorganic form, with the exception of minute traces of tetraethyl lead. A very considerable number of observations have been made on crank-case oil, and to the best of my knowledge no instance has been found of significant concentrations of tetraethyl lead. It would be recognized, of course, that to the extent that the fuel is unburned and mixed with crank-case oil, small quantities of tetraethyl lead might occur therein, along with the gasoline, as a contaminant. Actually, however, the concentrations have been too small to be of significance. Analyses have shown, moreover, that new oil before being introduced into the crank-case contains small quantities of lead compounds, and therefore not all of the lead in such oil is derived from the fuel. I do not suggest that crank-case oil is the best of all possible materials to use as the vehicle for insecticidal sprays for animals. For this reason I am not much disturbed by any allegations that would render such a solvent unpopular. On the other hand, I think the hogs can be regarded as quite safe from the viewpoint of percutaneous absorption of tetraethyl lead from any source.

Cordially yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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