

Swift Set to Destroy 50,000 Tainted Turkeys

By Elsie Carper

Washington Post Staff Writer

A batch of turkeys found tainted with the industrial chemical PCB will not be sold for human consumption, Swift & Co., the nation's biggest meat packer, announced yesterday.

Swift issued the announcement after it was reported that the Agriculture Department was testing the 50,000 birds held in a Minnesota warehouse to see if they could be salvaged for frozen dinners, soups and pot pies.

The Agriculture Department said it is routine to make such tests. But Swift said that regardless of the outcome, the company will destroy the birds or use them for feed for such nonedible animals as mink.

PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) is a man-made chemical with many of the proper-

ties of DDT. Until recently it was widely used in plastics, printing ink, carbonless carbon paper and other products. It is still used as a heat conductor. PCB degrades very slowly in the environment and, because it is fat soluble, finds its way into human tissue through the food chain.

The chemical is known to kill shellfish and game birds. In 1968, five Japanese died and 1,000 suffered severe skin rashes when a large amount of PCB contaminated a batch of cooking oil.

Agriculture said that if the company elected to salvage the turkeys, worth an estimated \$300,000, it could be done only if the meat had a PCB concentration of no more than 5 parts per million (ppm) after the fat was skimmed off in cooking and the skin and bones discarded.

The turkeys were taken off

the market by Swift in August after company tests showed heavy concentration of PCB. Agriculture confirmed that some of the birds had concentrations as high as 100 to 300 ppm.

The birds were discovered at the Swift Dairy and Poultry Co. plant, Detroit Lakes, Minn., in August. The source of the PCB has not been found.

This summer a chicken processing firm destroyed more than 50,000 chickens that had eaten contaminated fish meal.

Earlier in the year, thousands of chickens were destroyed in New York after they ate PCB in chicken feed had been made from stale bread and plastic bread wrapper, ground up together.

More recently, PCB was found to have leaked into dried foods from cardboard containers made of recycled paper.