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FDA claims Lake Pepin dealer knew early about tainted fish

Associated Press

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says the largest fish wholesaler on Lake Pepin has known since January 1971 that carp taken from the lake contained excessive amounts of the industrial chemical polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB).

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, Wis.

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

FDA tests in mid-1973 showed 10 and 7 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 additives such as PCB, which are not intentionally added during processing of food.

Seven federal and state agencies are now trying to pinpoint the source of the pollution through water and fish monitoring.

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