

C. C. Dr. Willard F. Machle

July 30, 1941.

Mr. O. B. Lewis,
Ethyl Gasoline Corporation,
Chrysler Building,
New York City.

Dear Mr. Lewis:

In response to your letter of July 17, concerning the storage of grain in certain tanks that have been used for storage of leaded gasoline, I wish to say that, in my opinion, the use of tanks for this purpose should be discouraged as much as possible. There would be a definite health hazard, in my opinion, in the use of grain stored in such tanks without thoroughly cleaning the tanks in advance of their use. My use of the term "thoroughly cleaned" in this relationship is quite different from the meaning of this expression when applied to a tank that is to be used for gasoline or other petroleum products. Any lead compounds which would remain within such a tank would contaminate the grain and might result in a case of lead poisoning from the use of the grain, either by animals or man. Accordingly, cleaning for such purposes as this would involve the complete removal of lead compounds by physical or chemical means. I am disposed to believe that a good job of sand blasting would make the tanks safe for the purpose of storing grain. However, that would depend on how thoroughly the job was done, especially at the joints in the plates, which would depend on how the job was done. However, I do not believe we would be in position to assure the user that it would be safe for the storage of food material. I doubt very much if such a tank could be cleaned satisfactorily by wire brushing. I repeat, therefore, that, in my opinion, we should discourage the use of such tanks for such purposes. If then, an individual or a company decides to go ahead, we shall have no responsibility in the matter.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Lence, M. D.