PCB - Arkansas

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U.S. Acts On 'PCB' Food Peril

By ELSIE CARPER

WASHINGTON (WP)—The Food and Drug Administration has announced new controls to limit human exposure to the DDT-like family of chemicals known as PCB.

The agency said it could not remove the toxic industrial chemicals from the environment but was taking the steps it could to keep them out of food.

PCBs in high concentrations are known to be a serious health hazard. The effect of low level, long-term human exposure is unknown, but studies on birds and animals raise the possibility of genetic defects.

3 Steps

The controls would:

¶ End the use of PCBs in plants that process food, animal feed or food packaging materials.

¶ Ban the use of recycled paper products containing PCBs for food packaging.

¶ Set temporary levels for PCB residues in food packing materials and in dairy and poultry products, fish, infant foods, and animal feed.

PCBs are a family of odorless and colorless, man-made industrial chemicals—polychlorinated biphenyls—that have been widely —used for the past 40 years as electrical insulating fluids, heat-transfer fluids, and in inks, paints, lubricants, plastics and carbonless carbon paper.

Ecology Hazard

The properties that have made them valuable to industry—they can withstand high heat and are highly stable—have made them an environmental hazard. Like DDT, they are fat-soluble and work their way up the food chain until they reach man.

Within a year, there have been at least four incidents of PCB contamination of poultry feed. Hundreds of thousands of chickens and turkeys and hundreds of crates of eggs have been taken off the market and destroyed. In one of the incidents PCBs got into the feed from a leaking heat-transfer unit.

The chemical has also been found in a variety of packaged foods. This was traced to use of recycled paper in the packaging, but Edwards said yesterday that PCBs now have also been found in virgin paper stocks.

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