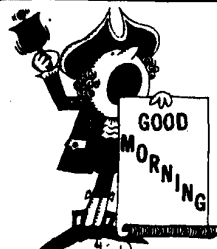


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## From DON WALLS

Although further study is needed, a chemist from Florida State University says the sperm density appears to be declining in American men and the blame can be placed on the toxic substances in the environment. Dr. Ralph Dougherty said his research findings, apparently the first of their kind, are preliminary and require extensive study.

However, the data suggest that a problem exists and it should be assessed.

"We ought to investigate the causes of the decline," he said during his report to a national meeting of the American Chemical Society held in Washington, D.C.

If such a problem exists there is a grave threat to the population of American males in general and procreation worldwide particularly. It would prompt the U.S. Government to set up a commission to enforce all able males to make daily deposits of sperm in "state" banks and probably someone like Jerry Lewis or Bart Parks or Farrah-Fawcett Majors would host telethons on television to plead with the male population to make generous donations.

These telethons would also feature entire groups of people like Klonomians, Optimists, Notarians, Elks, the YFW, et al. urging their members to donate deposits en masse to prevent human extinction.

Urologists from around the country would be called upon to perform a multitude of reverse vasectomies.

Dougherty said his study of semen samples from 132 volunteer donors at Florida State shows a correlation between toxic industrial compounds called PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, in the seminal fluid and decreased sperm density. PCBs are used primarily in the manufacture of electrical transformers and capacitors. Several years ago the environmental danger caused PCBs production to be curbed.

In addition to PCBs, Dougherty said the semen of the Florida State study he studied was contaminated by pesticides, chlorophenol, hexachlorobenzene and compounds resulting from metabolism of DDT. Other unidentified compounds also were found.

He said toxic substances act on sperm density by decreasing the rate of cell division. It takes at least eight cell divisions to produce a single sperm, he said, so substances that inhibit cell division can have a dramatic effect on sperm density.

Dougherty, whose research is supported by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, said most chemicals that affect cell division also can cause cancer in animals.

He said there have been several reports in the scientific literature in Europe and Japan as well as the United States suggesting — but not proving — that sperm density has decreased during the last 30 years.

A 1929 study found a distribution maximum of 100 million sperm per milliliter of fluid, he said, while a 1973 study found the greatest number of donors had a density of 60 million per milliliter.

In the Florida State study conducted during the past year, more students — 23 per cent — had a density of 20 million per milliliter than any other density. Many specialists, Dougherty said, consider such a density to be evidence of sterility.

He cautioned, there is reason to believe that students in general have lower sperm densities due to sociological and behavioral factors such as increased stress and increased sexual activity.

Dougherty said plans are now in the works to study other groups, particularly workers in factories where PCBs have been used, to measure sperm densities and look for an environmental cause.

While the male (human) animal has come to shed a few crocodile tears over his procreative fate, the alligator also seems to be in need of help from becoming tomorrow's soup meat and shoe leather.

The first Louisiana alligator hunt in 21 years got underway last week, and state officials said about 500 hunters were out in the south Louisiana bayous and swamps looking for a few extra dollars.

But Johnnie Tarver of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Department said federal rules for international trade in the skins have yet to be published.

"No one is going to tell how much they're going to pay for it," Tarver said, scoffing at estimates of \$30 a foot. "The government is going to put stipulations on the trade, and the buyers don't know what those stipulations are."

Tarver said the government should publish its guidelines in the Federal Register by the end of September.

Tarver said a family of trappers from Plaquemine Parish bagged 18 alligators in a few hours.

Tarver said hundreds of other sportsmen were out in Cameron, Calcasieu and Vermilion Parishes, where the last legal hunt was conducted two years ago. A statewide hunt has not been sanctioned since 1958 because alligators were believed to be endangered.

Tarver said the federal government gave its final approval to the alligator hunt, which will last through October 7.