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'Chemical Cousin' Of DDT May Be Real Culprit In Ecological Disasters

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — DDT has been getting the blame for a number of ecological disasters, but the real culprit may be a chemical cousin — poly-cholorinated biphenyls PCB, says the director of the State Pesticide Residue Laboratory.

"The research work is so new on it you hate to point your finger and say this is the problem, instead of this DDT problem," said lab chief Doyle Golden. "I wish this were six months later where we would have more conclusions to draw."

Assuming that Golden's suspicions — which he bared before a House subcommittee on hard pesticides last week — are confirmed, the implications are great.

PCBS are commonly used in the manufacture of a wide variety of products, including plastics, sealers, printing inks, waxes and adhesives. Many of the food products sold on supermarket shelves are wrapped in plastics containing PCBs.

PCBs are commonly used in nized as safe for man. However, they are being evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as numerous state labs for their toxicity," Golden said.

It is known that PCBs are toxic to certain species of animals. They were blamed for some fish kills last year.

"WE FOUND an extremely high level of PCBs in some of the fishes and animals in the fish kills at Escambia Bay," said Bill Woods of the Game and Fresh water Fish Commission.

He said the problem was traced to lubricants used at a Monsanto Co. plant which, ironically, is the major manufacturer of PCBs, but at another location.

PCBs, as Golden and Woods explained it, are extremely similar to DDT, in chemical structure and in their environmental behavior.

LIKE DDT, they said, PCBs are slow to breakdown and disappear and they concentrate in the tissues of animals that eat them.

From such evidence — as well as harder data gathered in the pesticide residue lab — Golden bases his theory that many of the damages attributed to DDT and other pesticides are really caused by PCBs.

As an Agriculture Department employe he has an obvious interest in pesticides, but his theory is supported — at least tentatively — by Air and Water Polution Control Department chemist Jay Carver.

"I think the way it's growing a lot of the blame that DDT is getting is going to show up to belong to the PCBs," Carver said. "I can't really say that for sure because not enough work has been done on it."

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