High PCB level found in doves and rabbits

RALEIGH (AP) — Levels of toxic PCBs as high as 19 times what is allowed for human consumption have been found in doves and rabbits taken near the 210 miles of North Carolina roadway where the toxic chemical was illegally dumped last fall, the state Wildlife Commission said.

But scientists had not determined Friday whether eating the game would be dangerous, according to the commission's executive director.

"After looking at the initial PCB levels found in doves and rabbits near the spill sites, we can't tell sportsmen that it is safe or unsafe to eat (game) from these areas," said Robert B. Hazel, executive director of the commission.

Federal game regulations would not allow the contaminated gamae to be sold for food.

"We simply don't know the public health implications of consuming contaminated wildlife," Hazel said Friday.

The animals were trapped or killed for testing shortly after the illegal dumping of the PCB-laced transformer oil. Rabbits and doves, the only animals tested, were taken from districts that include the entire 210 miles of roadway.

Birds feeding or picking up grit along the contaminated roadway would also be picking up PCBs, a commission spokesman said.

PCB has been found to cause cancer in laboratory animals. The substance is "biomagnifying," according to scientists, meaning it accumulates in the fatty tissues of the human body instead of being eliminated.

State officials are still looking for a disposal site for the tons of roadside dirt contamined by the illegal dumping. Intense public opposition has resulted in a delay of the selection of a site.

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