Larry O'Reilly - NSND

area

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State will destroy PCB contaminated farm silos

LANSING (AP) – A new state policy calls for the destruction and burial of almost 300 farm silos contaminated with toxic PCB and blamed for putting small amounts of the chemical in Michigan milk.

Officials said no detailed plan has been drafted to dispose of the silos, although the Legislature may be asked to pay up to $15 million if they have to be shipped out of state.

They said PCB in Michigan milk is blamed on cattle silage which was stored in the silos and contaminated by the suspected cancer-causing chemical. However, PCB levels are below federal tolerance limits, they added.

"If we want to eliminate the problem totally, it will require eliminating the silos," Kenneth Nordtvedt, chief of the Agriculture Department's Product Assurance Bureau, said Thursday.

But the announcement was met by some skepticism by an Elkton area dairy farm family which discovered in 1979 that its two silos on the Tinsmb farm were contaminated by PCB.

'Our reaction is, it's good. But let's find out just how they're going to do it.'

– Chris Schulz, of Elkton

"Our reaction is, it's good. But let's find out just how they're going to do it," said Chris Schulz, wife of dairy farmer Dale Schulz. "But Dale wants to know what is wrong with going to Minnesota Chemical Company, which knows how to dispose of PCB's, and have them handle the problem. It's logical to go back to the company that made the chemical that caused the problem. Isn't it? Have them pay for it. Why should the government pay for it? They must know it's their chemical. No one else made it."

Schulz's, along with the other contaminated silos, will be marked with signs and destroyed by Sept. 1. The policy was set by the Agriculture Commission.

No new feed or farm products could be stored in the tainted silos.

The rules will be debated at public hearings before returning to the commission for review. Then they go to the Legislature's House-Senate Committee on Administrative Rules for final approval.

Burton Cardwell, toxic substance coordinator with the department, said a survey of Michigan farms has turned up almost 275 silos contaminated with PCB – 180 of which still are in use.

The silos were built by a defunct firm which coated the interior with a sealant containing PCB – or polychlorinated biphenyl.

The chemical, now banned in Michigan, was used as an insulator and in electrical devices such as transformers.

Cardwell said the department has checked about 10,000 farms, with about 1,000 to 4,000 more to be examined. Samplings are taken from the interior walls of the suspect silos, generally built from 1941 to 1954, and examined in department laboratories.

Cardwell said heavily contaminated silos may have to be shipped out of state to [illegible] in an approved landfill. Less [illegible] may be buried on the farm, he said.

If all [illegible]

He said [illegible]

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