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Chemical Hindrance in DDT Tests Cited

Journal Madison Bureau

Madison, Wis. – Chemical agents that interfere with figures obtained when DDT and some of its cousins are tested became a key issue again Tuesday at the natural resources department hearing on whether DDT can be banned under Wisconsin pollution law.

The issue involved PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl), a series of chemical plasticizing agents used in industry that interfere with figures on DDT and its relatives.

Francis B. Coon, head of the chemistry department of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation institute, said that in a recent test on a coho salmon a recheck procedure showed that 70% of the DDT-DDD might have been PCB's.

Salmon Tested

Coon said the institute laboratory tested a salmon from Bear creek in Michigan for the National Agricultural Chemicals association, which is defending the pesticide at the hearing.

The first test with a gas chromatograph, which measures chemical materials by recording captured electrons in glass columns, showed 9.64 parts per million DDE, 3.64 pure DDT and 1.49 DDD, he said.

PCB's register close to DDT and DDD, Coon said. When recheck steps were taken to separate them further, he said, it showed only .78 parts per million DDT and .53 parts DDD.

Coon said his laboratory did not do these more detailed tests for DDE because they could take weeks without producing any significant scientific conclusion.

He said there also was no real certainty that PCB's interfered with DDE tests, but that if proper procedure was not used in test preparations, dieldrin, another pesticide, could show up as DDE.

Objections to Questions

Victor Yannacone, Patchogue, N. Y., attorney for the anti-DDT Citizens Natural Resources association which petitioned for the hearing, interrupted Coon's testimony frequently with objections to questions by Willard Stafford, Madison, counsel for the DDT manufacturers.

Whether DDE can be accurately measured is a key issue. Anti-DDT witnesses have said it can and it has been since researchers became aware of PCB's about two years ago.

One of Yannacone's chief witnesses, Prof. Joseph Hickey, a University of Wisconsin wildlife ecologist, has described DDE as the cause of production of enzymes in fish eating birds that made them produce unhatchable eggs and decline in population.

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