

# Pesticides In Perspective

**PART II**  
 (Continued From Last Week)  
 Pest Damage Costs

Livestock and forest crop losses from insects alone represent almost \$1 billion per year in the U.S. Losses from fungus diseases and weeds will run this figure up to the \$10 billion range. Destruction from rats and other rodents add another \$5 billion worth of damage. Obviously, without pesticide chemicals we would have costlier and poorer quality foods available. Americans almost automatically as-

sume themselves immune from insect and disease destruction of crops. The U.S. is still relatively well protected against insect and disease ravages when compared to the rest of the world. One insect species, the desert locust, can invade 11 million square miles, roughly 20 percent of the earth's land area, including 65 countries. The August, 1969, National Geographic further states that only with the use of insecticides in 1967 were the locusts contained and the threat to 15 billion dollars' worth of crops in

North Africa averted the following year.

The Entomological Society of America reports that 75 percent of the total land area of the U.S. has never had a pesticide applied directly on it. However, this does not mean that wildlife has a "safe conduct" pass in such areas. DDT and some other pesticides have been found in an drifts thousands of miles from the point of application. Migratory species cross treated areas and are exposed enroute, then enter the untreated areas. Some species enter the food chain. Yet, pesticides are only one of many problems that wildlife faces — polluted water, land reclamation, fire, vandalism, automobiles, motor boats, and urban encroachment all do their share to disturb the wildlife habitat.

### DDT Toxicity

A great benefit to mankind was the discovery that DDT would control vectors such as mosquitoes, fleas, ticks, lice and flies which cause at least 30 serious human diseases. At least 5 million lives have been saved and no less than 100 million cases prevented through the use of DDT for controlling malaria, typhus, dysentery, encephalitis and many other diseases. With all this treatment and exposure of humans to DDT, not one death has ever been attributed to this insecticide. There is no well described case of fatal, uncomplicated DDT poisoning, even after suicidal attempts.

### Protective Measures

Human deaths attributed to pesticides are practically nonexistent in mortality statistics. There are 137 Poison Control and treatment Centers operated by Pennsylvania Department of Health authorities and local medical teams. Personnel are trained to watch for cases of pesticide

poisoning. Two pesticide fatalities were recorded in Pennsylvania in 1968 when two women accidentally drank what they assumed was a soft drink, but unfortunately was a pesticide brought home in a soft drink bottle. An infant, according to a newspaper report, died from drinking weed killer found in a bottle when it crawled about the yard in 1969. These tragic accidents emphasized the need for continued stress of safe use and storage practices. Some concerned persons feel that many deaths could be caused by pesticides but diagnosed otherwise. However, laboratory techniques in medical care are more refined and more common than ever before, and it hardly seems likely that pesticide poisoning would be overlooked for long.

### Monitoring For Pesticides

Monitoring for organic chemical pesticide residue has been in operation by federal scientists since 1964. Samples are periodically taken of the following categories in the nationwide surveillance program:

- 1 Consumer foods and animal feeds
  - a Market basket — twelve food items from food stores in five geographic regions
  - b Unprocessed food and feed
  - c Meat samples at slaughter
- 2 Human levels within 3 population groups from 15 states in relation to exposure to pesticides
  - a Blood serum and adipose tissue
  - b Post mortem — body fat
- 3 Fish, wildlife and estuaries
  - a Eight species of fish from 50 sites
  - b Five bird species including live stulings, ducks taken by hunters and eagles found dead

- c Oysters, clams and sediments from 24 rivers, bays, and sounds
- 4 Water
  - a Fifty collecting stations at river mouths or above-tidal water zone
  - b Fifteen collecting stations at upper river locations
- 5 Soil
  - a High use area — 5 farms/area 16 states
  - b Low use area—forest in sect control sites, 17 states
  - c Non use areas — wildlife refuges and national forest lands, 13 states

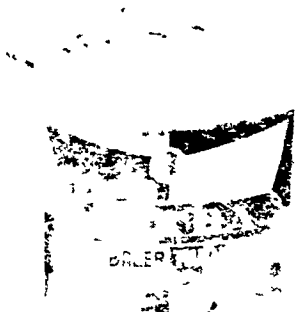
Pesticide residue results up to the present have indicated that there has been no progressive buildup of any great magnitude of any organic pesticide in soil, sediment, or water in monitored areas. Check of other control programs have revealed little danger to human health, wildlife, or fish.

The balance of nature is a phrase much misunderstood. The term is used to preface the charge that man has tampered with nature — that if only he lived in harmony with it, the problems associated with our existence would disappear. The amazing thing about this notion is not that a natural mechanism does exist — for order is apparent in existence — but that many people consciously or subconsciously accept that nature has afforded man special privileges that are unchanging. But man is not exempt, if his numbers increase some accommodation has to be made. The condition on our planet is one of struggle — species against species with dominance among the species shifting back and forth also there are shifts within the species.

Man, who is preeminent on the planet, has tampered with nature. (Continued on Page 20)

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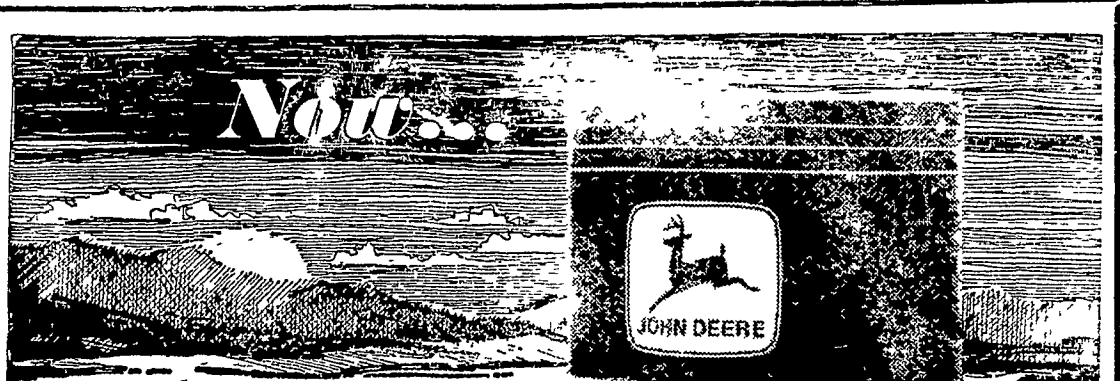
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