



Washington Report

By Senator Dick Schweiker

Schweiker Bill Controls Lead Content in Dinnerware

The good health of all Americans is the primary concern of the Senate Health Subcommittee, on which I am ranking Republican. Our responsibilities include such far-reaching legislation as the recently enacted cancer bill and the heart disease bill, as well as the lesser-known problems of black lung, sickle cell anemia, and lead paint poisoning.

Lead poisoning in dinnerware is another obscure problem we will be dealing with in the months ahead. I recently introduced a bill, S 3136, to regulate the use of lead and cadmium in the manufacturing of dinnerware, because excessive leakage of these elements can cause nausea, retardation, and even death.

Although the great majority of domestically manufactured dinnerware and stoneware is perfectly safe, there still exist an alarming number of poisonings from the leakage of lead or cadmium into our food and liquids from faultily made ceramic and enamel dinnerware.

The problem occurs when dinnerware is fired in the kiln at an insufficiently high temperature. Then, and only then, can lead or cadmium (a metallic element used in the glaze coating) be "leached" or leak into a liquid or food being stored in ceramic or enamel dinnerware.

Last year a 17-month-old Philadelphia baby died after drinking orange juice from a pitcher that the Food and Drug Administration later

found to contain excessively high levels of lead. Less than one part per million lead, a totally harmless amount, is released by products made by most dinnerware manufacturers, but some smaller shops and foreign producers are not always as careful.

The bill will strike at the heart of this problem by increasing the authority of the FDA to expand the dinnerware industry test to all products, both domestic and imported. It also does the following things:

—Requires the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to establish maximum quantities of lead and cadmium which may be released from dinnerware.

—Sets an interim maximum release level of seven (7) parts per million of lead and 0.5 parts per million of cadmium.

—Requires that each article of dinnerware made in the U.S., or imported into the U.S., bear the name and place of business of the manufacturer.

—Adds "dinnerware" as a specific category subject to regulation by the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Lead poisoning in dinnerware was the subject of a recent NBC-TV special that attracted national attention to this problem. The NBC-TV CHRONOLOG program told of dangerous levels of lead in dinnerware used in Monroe

County, N.Y., and demonstrated how lead poisoning in general is a clear and present danger to the health of the American people.

I have long been interested in the potentially dangerous effort of lead on the human body, and in 1970 I introduced a bill to provide civil penalties for the use of lead-based paint in certain dwellings. The most common victims of lead-based paint poisoning are children between the ages of one and six who contract it by eating flakes of lead-based paint from pre World War II dwellings. As with excessive lead in dinnerware, repeated ingestion of lead-painted substances can lead to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, optic atrophy, and impairment of intellectual ability.

Thankfully, we have begun to make progress in the fight against the tragedy of lead-based paint poisoning. Now we must expand the battle to include the serious dangers of lead from other sources, and I hope my new bill can go a long way towards eliminating the threat of lead poisoning in dinnerware.

Reports of Rabies

Verified cases of rabies have been reported in ten counties across the Commonwealth, with an increased incidence of 90 percent, according to State Secretary of Agriculture Jim McHale.

Statistics compiled by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Animal Industry, Miscellaneous Diseases Division, reveal nineteen cases of rabies in the first eight month period of Fiscal Year 1971-72, between July 1, 1971 and February 29, 1971. Ten cases are on file for the same period in the previous year.

The ten counties and the number of cases reported in each are as follows: Berks (1), Clearfield (3), Greene (3), Huntingdon (1), Luzerne (1), Montgomery (4), Northampton (1), Snyder (1), Philadelphia (1), and Tioga (3).

Bats remain the number one carrier of the disease. Among the nineteen new cases, seven bats were inflicted, four of which were from Montgomery County. Other animals infected with rabies

were: Dogs (one), skunks (three), fox (four) and cattle (four).

A total of three cases were uncovered since the first of this calendar year, one bat and two head of cattle.

Dr. Charles D. Clark, VMD, Chief of the Division of Labs in the Bureau of Animal Industry, said, "Based on the number of rabies cases in previous years, increased incidence at this time is not unexpected due to the cyclical nature of the disease." He also said that "Wildlife continues to be the major source of animal rabies in Pennsylvania."

The number of rabies cases has been on the decline over the past few decades. In 1943, 724 dogs alone were infected with the disease in Pennsylvania. In the calendar year of 1962, there was a total of 58 cases reported in the Commonwealth. Dr. Clark attributes the sharp decline to the vaccination of pets and animals.

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