


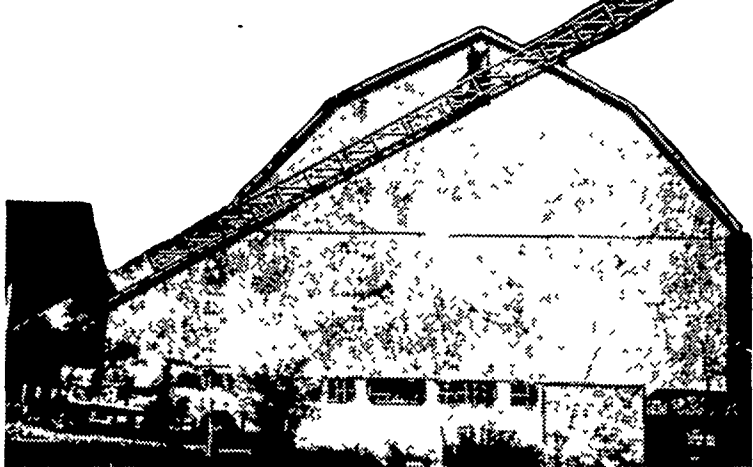
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Human Trace Element Need In Diets Not Fully Defined

Man be the most poorly nourished creature in the animal kingdom, a scientist from Penn State observed recently.

The problem may arise with levels of minerals elements in human foods, stated Dr. Roland M. Leach at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science held in Philadelphia

Recommended daily mineral allowances for human diets have been established only for iron, Leach pointed out. In contrast, the nutritional requirements of animals such as swine and poultry, laboratory animals, and pets are known and their food is formulated to meet their needs.

On the basis of studies to date, Leach questioned whether trace elements such as iron, copper, zinc, manganese, selenium, and chromium may be deficient in human diets. Involved in numerous studies of trace elements, he addressed the AAAS meetings as associate professor of poultry science at Penn State.

He listed three factors that could reduce the availability of trace elements in food: (1) A shift from a soil-plant-animal-man food chain to the more direct route of soil-plant-man food chain, (2) removal of trace elements through refining, already a problem, and (3) the chemical form in which the element is presented. As an example of the latter, the forms of iron used to fortify foods have very poor biological availability, according to recent experiments.

He claimed the proposed widespread use of plant protein concentrates for human diets is a matter for concern. While plants may prove to be excellent sources of vital protein, trace elements in these food products may be poorly utilized by the human digestive system. Experiments with animals

have demonstrated that phytic acid—common to plant—is the primary factor responsible for poor availability of trace elements in plant products. Zinc is the element most severely affected by phytic acid. There is some evidence that manganese, iron, and copper may be affected similarly, Leach said.

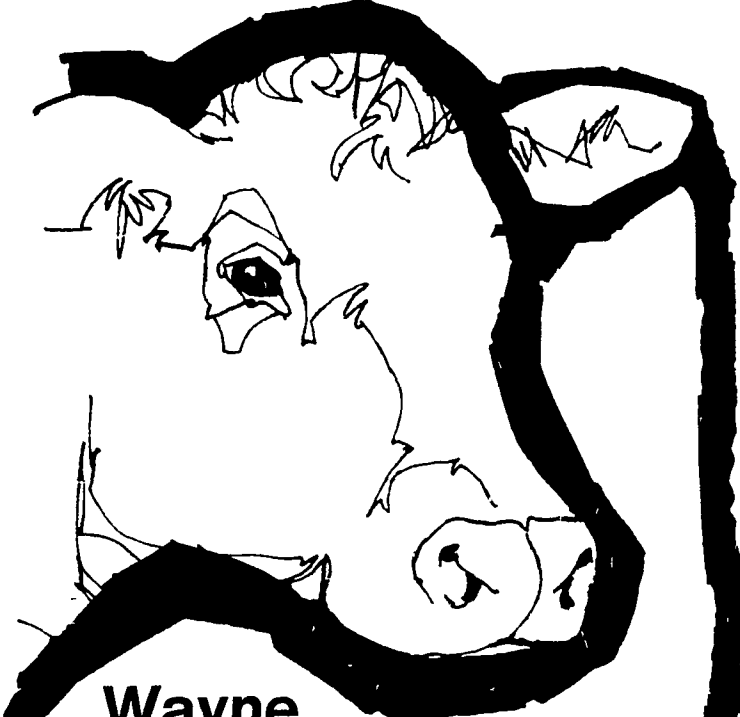
Three techniques are available, he claimed, to correct trace element shortages caused by phytic acid. The first is to develop plants free of phytic acid through genetic selection. The second method is to increase the natural trace element levels in plants through fertilization and breeding. The third possibility is to fortify diets, as now done with iron.

Trace element deficiencies or imbalances can also be induced,

he observed, by introducing toxic quantities of mineral elements into the food chain. Heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, and mercury—applied to the soil from sewage sludge and animal wastes—could possibly interfere with the soil-plant-man trace element food chain

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Motor-vehicle accidents are one of the major causes of death and injury to agricultural workers. An important aid to accident prevention on public roads is use of the slow-moving vehicle emblem on vehicles designed to travel at 25 m p h or less, says the National Safety Council. The Williams-Steiger Occupational Safety and Health Act requires the use of the emblem on all such vehicles operated by farm or ranch employees.




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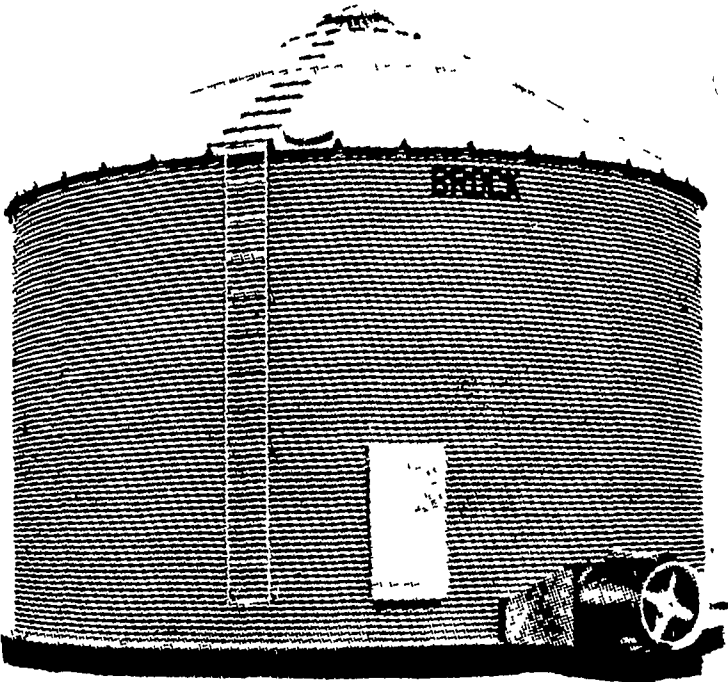


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