

Phony pesticide sales reported

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Some farmers could wind up spending \$3,289 an acre for weed control this spring, if they fall for the phony telephone sales pitches of a few unscrupulous pesticide companies, a concerned coalition of Federal, State and private organizations warned late last week.

Many State agriculture departments and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have received numerous complaints from farmers and other consumers who say they have been telephoned by salespersons making false or misleading claims for some weed control products.

The claims include that the products are non-toxic to people, livestock and fish; that they will control all weeds when in fact they will only control some; that they can be used on crops or pastures when actually they may damage or destroy these areas; and that they will curb all weeds for up to three years. Prizes are sometimes offered to the farmer if he will buy. The calls are normally made in the early morning or late afternoon.

Officials in North Carolina, where some of the deceptive telephone promotion has been occurring, have reported that one weed killing product is recommended for use at the

rate of 40 to 200 gallons per acre. At the 220 gallon level, the State has calculated that it would cost a farmer \$3,289 to treat one acre.

"In most situations, farmers and other pesticide users should buy products only after they have been able to read the products' label," advise EPA Administrator Russell E. Train. "Telephone purchases are all right only if the buyer is dealing with a reputable agent personally known to him."

"The statements, and precautions on pesticide labels are backed up by intensive scientific study and careful scrutiny. The label provides a guarantee that the product will do an effective job in an environmentally safe way. Users should always read and follow label instructions when applying a pesticide," Train said.

Pesticide buyers should make it unmistakably clear to any telephone huckster that they are not interested in and will not pay for the weed control products, the coalition warned. Reports indicate that waivering buyers have sometimes been shipped the pesticides C.O.D.

Other groups concerned about the telephone sales problem are the U.S. Department of Agriculture,

the Federal Trade Commission, other Federal agencies, several farm organizations including the National Grange and the American Farm Bureau, several environmental and consumer organizations including the Environmental Defense Fund, and farm chemicals trade associations.

"The vast majority of pesticide producers and dealers in this country condemn these unethical actions on the part of a dishonest few," Train said.

Besides North Carolina, complaints of bogus telephone claims have also come from farmers and other users in Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Nevada, New York, Washington, West Virginia and other States.

Some of the weed control chemicals found in the falsely advertised products include 2, 4-D, bromacil, pentachlorophenol, pramit and diguat dibromide. All of these are legitimate weed control agents, according to the EPA, but they may be ineffective or illegal for the uses being claimed.

Prosecution of suspected firms has been difficult because of the problem of building a legal case on the basis of phone conversations. But North Carolina has been active. Two pesticide companies - Dartmouth Chemical Corp., and Oxford Chemical Corp., both of Woodbury, New York - have been prohibited from doing business in the State because of deceptive phone practices. Another firm, Jaguar Chemical Corp., New York, New York, has been suspended from selling in North Carolina until July 1,

1976 and was made to refund \$5,000 in purchases by duped customers. Investigations also are underway now by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"There are few records of these phone conversations," Train said. "The firms involved are shrewd. They appear to know pesticide

laws quite well. They will often avoid a blatantly false claim but instead rely on innuendo or implication or leave our certain vital information."

The coalition urged farmers to help stop the telephone sales racket by keeping an accurate record of such calls and reporting

them immediately to a local agricultural agency or one of EPA's ten regional offices. Helpful information would include: date of the call, caller's name, his company, his phone number, the product, the manufacturer and the EPA registration number of the product if it exists.

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There's been a lot said about conserving energy and reducing fuel bills since we lined up for gasoline during the famed oil embargo. Yet with all the rhetoric, many of us still face constantly increasing utility bills.

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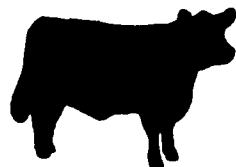
"Since about 30% of a home's heat loss occurs right through the roof, you can reduce your fuel bill significantly by insulating your attic. There should be a minimum of 6 inches of fiber glass insulation (R-19) on the attic floor," Miss Ritchie says. In the average home (1400 sq. ft.) this insulation pays for itself in three years in utility bill savings.

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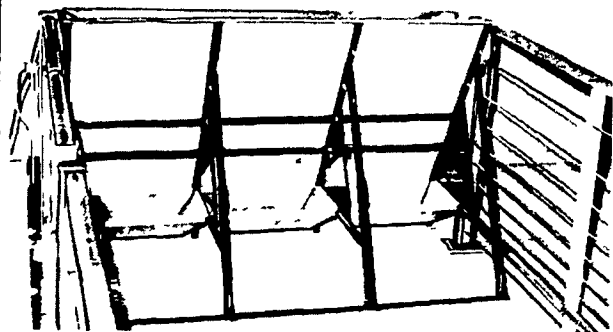
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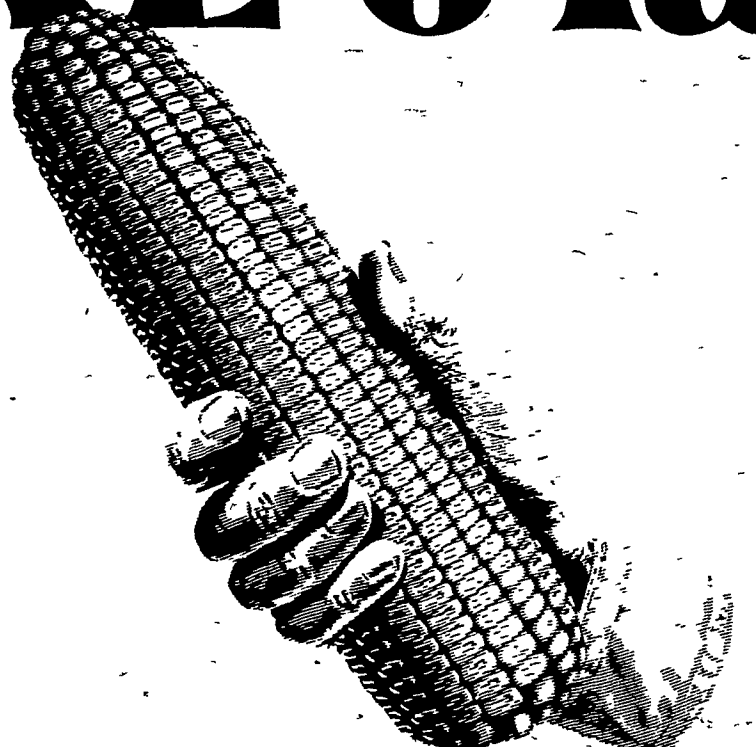
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