Tests show unleaded gas will hurt older machinery

PARK RIDGE, IL. — Recent tests conducted by a major fuel refiner indicate older farm engines will suffer extensive damage if run with unleaded gasoline. Tests performed by Phillips Petroleum show the use of unleaded fuel in older engines under moderate load resulted in substantial engine damage (valve seat wear). The Phillips' study showed that valve system wear accelerated by more than 10 times when unleaded fuel was used in engines without hardened valve seats.

Effective July 1, 1985, the Environmental Protection Agency ordered gas refiners to reduce the amount of lead in regular gasoline from 1.1 grams per gallon to 0.5 grams per gallon. Under the EPA order, the lead content will be further reduced to 0.1 grams by January, 1986 with a complete ban proposed by 1988.

"The Phillips' Petroleum tests confirm our worst fears," said Dennis Stolte, a national affairs director for the American Farm Bureau Federation. "The lead in gasoline acts as a lubricant preventing valve wear." Older model gasoline engines do not have the hardened valve seats necessary to prevent valve wear.

Officials from EPA met this week with Stolte and Jim Porterfield, a natural resources director with AFBF plus representatives of Phillips Petroleum and Lubrizol to discuss problems caused by the lead phase-out. The meeting also included a review of possible additives. Phillips and Lubrizol are in the process of developing additives which farm users could add to unleaded gas. "At this point, Farm Bureau is urging an exemption, allowing farmers to purchase bulk quantities of leaded gas. Until the effectiveness of additives is proven, their use would be a second alternative," said Stolte.

"In conversations with EPA, Farm Bureau has made it clear the problem with older engines will be with us for some time to come,"

said Porterfield. "In our recent survey of our members, one respondent reported owning five tractors and the newest was a 1959 model. He said he planned to use all of them for some time to come. This is just one example of the reliance many of the nation's farmers have on good older equipment," Porterfield added.

"The EPA lead phase-down order poses both risks and potential benefits for American farmers. On the positive side, a reduction in lead content reduces gasoline octane levels. This has created a tremendous new market for ethanol as an octane enhancement. New markets for ethanol means new markets for corn and other agricultural commodities. The study by Phillips, however, provides substantial new evidence that fuel for older engines must also contain some amount of lead for valve lubrication. Currently, there are no other additives available which serve this function," said Stolte.

The American Farm Bureau Federation is seeking to delay the ban until a study is conducted to assess the impact on farmers. Legislation has been introduced by Illinois Congressmen Edward Madigan (HR 2795) and South

Dakota Senator James Abnor (S. 1393) to require a joint study by EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The legislation has 69 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives and 12 co-sponsors in the Senate.

Soybean loan rate set at \$5.02

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued a preliminary loan and purchase rate for 1985-crop soybeans of \$5.02 per bushel, the minimum permitted by law and unchanged from 1984.

Everett Rank, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, said the loan is set by law at 75 percent of the simple average price received by farmers during the past five years, excluding the high and low years. USDA is required by law to issue a preliminary loan and purchase rate not earlier than 30 days before Sept. 1, the beginning of the soybean marketing year.

Rank said USDA will issue a final 1985 soybean loan and purchase rate no later than Oct. 1, by which time USDA will have figures on prices received by farmers for the 1984 crop.

All producers of 1985-crop soybeans will be eligible for loans and purchases since USDA does not require participation in production adjustment programs as a condition of eligibility. Soybeans are ineligible for any reserve program or farm storage payments.

Further details on the loan and purchase rate for 1985-crop soybeans is scheduled to be published in the Aug. 22 Federal Register.

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