

PUBLIC HEALTH

Eat DDT But Not Nicotine

Regulations governing the amount of poisonous chemicals that can safely be left on foods are announced. Consumer protection is their aim.

► AMERICANS ARE now allowed to eat DDT and petroleum oils, but not nicotine or mercury.

Proposed regulations governing the amount of poisonous chemicals remaining on fresh fruits and vegetables without causing harm to the consumer have now been revealed.

The regulations enforce the Miller pesticide chemicals amendment to the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act, which was signed into law by President Eisenhower this summer. This amendment literally makes the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare responsible for polishing the nation's apples.

Designed to protect the public from eating too much insect-killing pesticides, used by farmers in their continuing war against pests, the new regulations set up safety limits for the amount of residue that can remain on a product ready for market.

The safety limits are called tolerances. A zero tolerance, for instance, would mean that no residue may remain when the fruit or vegetable is sold to the public. Tolerances have been established in parts per million ratio to the food product.

DDT has been given a tolerance of seven. There is no numerical limit on the scale of tolerances.

The new regulations list 26 tolerances for pesticides now in common use. They are based on scientific data collected during hearings held in 1950.

The regulations also establish operational procedures for tolerances to be set on new pesticides, as well as those now in use, but not included in the 26.

No residue of such chemical pesticides as calcium cyanide, mercury-containing compounds, or nicotine and nicotine-containing compounds can remain on fruits or vegetables ready for market.

These, in effect, have been given a zero tolerance. However, this does not mean

that they cannot be used by the farmer. What it does mean is that fruit and vegetables after harvest must have no chemical residue remaining on them.

Calcium cyanide, for example, although highly poisonous, disappears soon after application and there remains no harmful residue after harvest.

The new regulations also:

Exempt a group of common pesticides that are entirely safe when properly used, such as petroleum oils and copper compounds.

Establish operating procedures that make the administration of the new law self-supporting. Application fee for a tolerance rating is \$500. Extending an established tolerance to other crops costs another \$140.

Set up a procedure for appealing a tolerance that the manufacturer thinks is unfair.

Under the law, the Secretary of Agriculture first determines whether a pesticide is useful in agricultural production. Then the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare must act upon the petition for a tolerance and establish a tolerance.

Zero tolerances are to be set whenever it is found that any amount of chemical residue is unsafe for the public, or where there is insufficient data to establish safety.

Fruits and vegetables distributed through interstate commerce, when found to contain higher amounts of residue than set by the tolerance, will be confiscated by Food and Drug inspectors, aided by their State counterparts.

Science News Letter, October 30, 1954

MEDICINE

Treating Hangovers Led To New Resuscitator

► A POCKET-SIZED resuscitator and anesthetic machine developed originally for treatment of hangovers, is announced by Dr. Robert A. Hingson of Western Reserve University School of Medicine and University Hospitals, Cleveland, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Oct. 9).

Suggested uses for it are: in a dentist's office to replace the local anesthetic used in about 80% of the 85,000,000 dental anesthetics conducted each year; in hospital emergency rooms for short time anesthesia; in some of the 10% of the nation's births in which delivery is more sudden than expected; by patients with heart trouble, at home or in the office; by passengers of planes at high altitudes; and by police and firemen in drowning accidents, mine explo-

sions, fires, and other suffocation emergencies.

The apparatus could be dropped undamaged from a plane even without a parachute to forward positions on the battlefield and in disaster areas.

The new machine weighs less than two pounds including thumb-sized gas or oxygen cylinders. The smallest such unit now in use weighs 40 pounds. Without gas or oxygen tanks attached, the new device weighs about 17 ounces and can be held in the palm of one hand. It has a rubber face mask, a rebreathing bag and two aluminum arms to contain gas or oxygen cylinders.

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