

Seed Treatment Development

Registration recently of a 'systemic' fungicide marks a new phase in the continuing evolution of seed-treatment chemicals for cereal crops, says Dr. T. G. Atkinson of the Canada Agriculture Research Station, Lethbridge, Alta.

The fungicide is Vitavax, the first seed-treatment chemical that will control embryo-borne loose smuts of wheat and barley. Seed growers will probably be the first to use this new product.

Its registration marks the introduction of a new class of fungicides to Canadian agriculture and represents a big step forward in the evolution of chemical seed treatments, says Dr. Atkinson, a specialist in cereal crop diseases. He foresees the day, possibly not too far off, when systemic-type pesticides will be applied as seed treatments to control diseases that attack the foliage and roots of plants. 'Systemics' are carried from the point of application to all parts of a plant in its circulatory system.

The growing concern about pesticide pollution may also lead to other developments in seed treatment practices in the decade just begun, he believes.

Although there may be changes, use of chemicals to treat seed will probably continue to play an important role in controlling seed and

soil-borne pests of cereal crops.

Chemical treatment of cereal seed on the prairies was introduced to prevent the heavy losses caused by surface-borne smuts of wheat, barley and oats. Illustrative of the resulting downturn in the incidence of these smuts is the fact that 20 years ago 299 carlots of wheat graded smutty while only 15 carlots were rejected for this reason in the last crop year.

Use of smut-resistant varieties contributed to the decline but the necessity for seed treatment is apparent from the fact that susceptible varieties still account for over 75 per cent of the spring wheat acreage and all winter wheat varieties grown in Alberta are susceptible.

Chemical treatment originally was intended to kill disease organisms carried on the seed. Discovery that the seed provided an effective vehicle for chemicals to protect seeds and seedlings against soil-borne disease and insect pests led to formulations containing aldrin, heptachlor or lindane to control wireworms and to others that protect flax from soil-borne fungi to which it is very susceptible.

Effectiveness in controlling pests is only one criterion by which pesticides must be judged, however.

The limitations recently imposed on the use of DDT,

and the reports from Alberta and Montana that spilled or dumped treated grain was the likely source of high levels of mercury found in pheasants and partridge emphasize the responsibility that industry, government, and the public must share to assure the safe use and disposal of pesticides, Dr. Atkinson says.

'Industry and government laboratories are seeking less persistent chemicals to replace aldrin, lindane and heptachlor. Meanwhile, these chemicals should be used only when there is definite evidence of a wireworm problem.'

Organo-mercurial compounds, despite their relatively high toxicity, have been the most popular seed dressings because they are effective against a wide range of seed and soil-borne fungi, are inexpensive, and are available as dusts, liquids or as drillbox formulations. But advances in research now provide farmers with alternatives to them. Polyram or products containing maneb are not as toxic but have the same spectrum of effectiveness. Seed dressings containing captan are effective in protecting flax from seed rot and seedling blights.

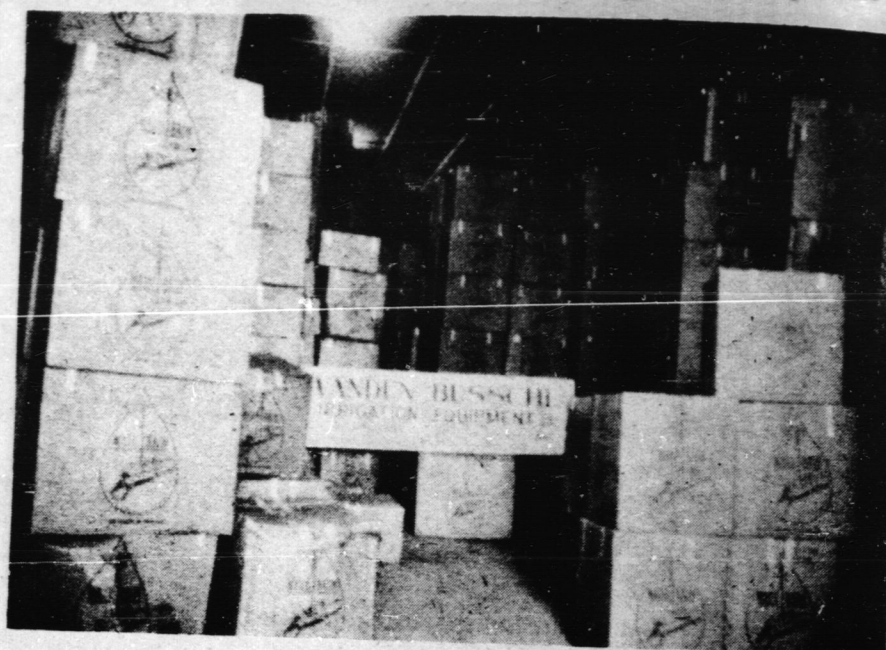
But the lower toxicity of these nonmercurials does not make extreme care any the less important in handling treated grain or ensuring that it is used only for seed, Dr. Atkinson warns.

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Canadian Children Unvaccinated

TORONTO, Despite the distribution of 55 million doses of one-shot Lirugen measles vaccine throughout the world, "an estimated 1,000,000 Canadian children still remain unvaccinated", a spokesman for a leading Canadian pharmaceutical company said here.

Robert Wight, of the Pharmaceutical Division of Dow Chemical of Canada, Limited, was referring to press reports on the spectacular increase in measles since January 1. The Federal Department of Health reported the incidence was almost five times greater than in the corresponding period of 1969.

"It would appear that children are simply not getting their vaccinations as they should", he said. "It is difficult to understand why parents are not having their children immunized when vaccine is available."

It is estimated that more than 1,000,000 children have already been vaccinated in Canada with the one-shot vaccine, but an estimated 1,000,000 others are still unvaccinated and susceptible.

Medical authorities point out that many parents are unaware of the possible harmful effects of common, red, 10-day measles (rubella). Encephalitis or mental retardation can result.

Dr. C. S. Anglin, associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Toronto and associate physician at the Hospital for Sick Children was recently quoted as saying that measles vaccine is one of the safest and most effective vaccines available.

Chain Reaction To DDT

I don't know what got into me
I sprayed a fly with DDT.
It fell, and there beside the road
Twas swallowed by a tiny toad.
A hog-nose snake came flowing by
And ate the toad, and from the sky
A hawk swooped down and snatched the snake
But dropped it writhing, in the lake
Where naturally a pickerel lay
To put the writhing snake away.
I caught the pickerel in the pond
A fish of which I'm very fond
And baked it, as I now recall,
And ate it, DDT and all.
I don't know what got into me -
Just some more darned DDT!
Poet unknown.



Mental Health Conference Traces Problems From Youth

OTTAWA, 'Let's thing it together', was the request made by Dr. W. A. Cochrane to the 150 delegates attending the opening session of the National Conference on Mental Action for Mental Health.

In line with the theme of the Conference, Problems of Childhood and Youth, Dr. Cochrane borrowed from the vocabulary of the young to say, it is no longer good enough for people to 'do their own thing'.

Dr. Cochrane, Dean of Medicine at the University of Calgary, said that professionals dealing with mentally ill youngsters have generally worked independently of one another, failing to communicate effectively among themselves and the parents of mentally ill children and youth.

Such professional isolationism among the medical profession, educators and social service officials has, he said, led to a duplication of services and personnel which can 'no longer be tolerated'.

This duplication and inadequate co-ordination has resulted 'not only in a great wastage of finances, but also wastage of time and

development of an effective program for the affected children in that community'.

Dr. Cochrane's desire for greater communications, dialogue, and interaction was shared by other speakers.

John Munro, Minister of National Health and Welfare, suggested to his luncheon audience that the 'generation gap' was in fact a 'communications gap' and that today's adults should be searching for a 'common ground for dialogue', rather than creating barriers.

With a slightly different view of the generation gap but with a similar emphasis on the need for communication and dialogue with young people, Mr. J. K. Crossley, told delegates that educational institutions must abandon the factory and corporation as their models and strive, instead, to incorporate the qualities of the ideal family.

Mr. Crossley, Superintendent of Curriculum with the Ontario Department of Education, maintained that the 'generation gap' is very real and a matter of concern. The influences on our young people today have created a very different

type of person and as such, he said, the present institutional structures are not adequate.

Mr. Crossley expressed the hope that the qualities of acceptance and interpersonal relationships, found within the ideal home, would become part of the entire educational system.

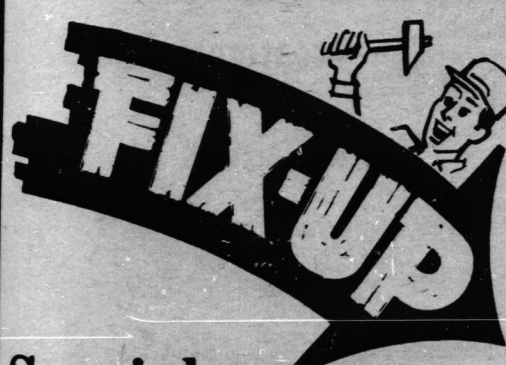
Every student must be accepted as a 'person in his own right just as, in the ideal family, all members are there by right of birth'.

In all schools there should exist a closeness of interpersonal relationships in which dialogue, discussion and participation in common activities are characteristic of the daily routine in the school.

The conference aims to bring the need for more adequate mental health services for children into focus and to make the medical profession aware of all the services, particularly non-medical services, now available in helping youngsters with mental health problems.

Concrete recommendations will be made to be put forward to government and other groups to assist in solving these problems.

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