Pesticide Spraying

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Statement Presented by Walter J. Everin, Director, Montana Fish and Game Department, at Interagency Meeting on Insecticides

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The Montana Fish and Game Department is deeply concerned about the effect of pesticide spraying over broad areas. Studies in Montana disclosed that spraying DDT at one pound per acre caused some fish kills, some of which were serious. During a three year study, fish mortalities following spraying were observed on five streams and one mountain lake. On two streams, game fish reduction of 70 percent and 84 percent occurred.

In addition, the DDT frequently reduced the food supply of fish by 90 percent. Usually the recovery of the aquatic bottom organisms on which fish feed was rapid, but in some cases their availability was lowered for three years.

We understand aldrin is to be used in a wide spread grasshopper control program in eastern Montana this summer. Aldrin is more than twice as toxic to rainbow trout than is DDT. Therefore, spray applied at only one ounce per acre could be sufficient to cause fish kills. Respraying every few years could virtually eliminate fishing.

Likewise, aldrin is lethal to song birds, game birds and waterfowl. The young of such birds are particularly sensitive.

In addition to the direct toxicity of aldrin and other chlorinated hydrocarbons these chemicals are known to disrupt reproduction and other body functions in surviving animals.

Our chief concern with respect to big game animals, such as deer and antelope, is the accumulation of aldrin residues in the flesh and fat. Studies show that this occurs. The Pure Food and Drug Administration has ruled that meat and fat containing aldrin may not legally enter interstate commerce. In other words contaminated domestic or game animal products destined for human consumption may not be transported across state borders. If game animals are contaminated it will eliminate nonresident

hunting in eastern Montana and in turn will have a tremendous impact on the recreation industry.

A study recently published by Dr. Oliver Cope of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service disclosed DDT residues in every one of 86 brown trout, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout and mountain whitefish from eight waters checked in the upper Yellowstone River drainage. Some of these fish were from remote waters in Yellowstone National Park where there had never been any DDT spraying. What happens to fishing and hunting in Montana if aldrin residues become this widespread?

In a statement prepared for the National Wildlife Federation, Dr. Clarence Cottam, nationally recognized authority on pesticides, said:

"Highly toxic and long-lasting pesticide poisons have caused significant numbers of deaths among birds, mammals, fish and other aquatic organisms and beneficial insects along with some losses of domestic livestock and probably poultry. Furthermore, even when not taken in lethal amounts, the chemicals are known to reduce natural reproductive rates in birds and weaken them to the point where they fall victim to predators and diseases.

"Poisons washing from fields into streams and lakes not only kill fish and other aquatic creatures, including some birds and mammals, but threaten to contaminate surface and subsurface public water supplies for long periods of time.

"Residues of some poisons build up or accumulate in tissues and can be transmitted to man through the consumption of domestic meat products and wild game as well as milk and raw agricultural commodities."

We do not oppose legitimate pest control but insist that all interests and resources be considered in widespread pest control programs. We feel we are rendering a public service in insisting that instead of aldrin a less dangerous pesticide such as sevin be used. Sevin is not nearly as toxic as aldrin to fish and wildlife.