

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Manufacturers Responsibility

ECONOMIC POISONS manufacturers may be responsible for damage resulting from the misuse of their preparations according to the Supreme Court of Virginia. CalSpray was on the paying end of the decision which gave two orchardists \$30,000 in damages for partial destruction of their 1949-50 apple crop following application of phenyl mercuric acetate—which is recommended for treatment of scab infections of apple trees by many state agricultural stations, including Virginia's. Despite the fact that directions for application of the compound were not followed and a label statement that the buyer would assume responsibility for damage resulting from misuse of the material, the court ruled that the company was at fault for not explaining what would happen if the material were not used according to directions.

Feed Supplements Grow

THE FEED SUPPLEMENT business is showing a lot of promise. We are told by men in the field that they consider it not unlikely that the sale of antibiotics—which skyrocketed rather sensationally for medical purposes a few years ago—for feed supplements may exceed the quantity sold through pharmaceutical outlets. Amino acids and vitamin B₁₂ are picking up speed. DuPont is getting ready to do tests in Pennsylvania involving 20,000 broilers at a time, to study the effects of other ingredients in poultry feed on methionine which they manufacture for addition to rations. Objective: supplement for about 9 million tons of poultry feed. Monsanto, already in the field with amino acid supplements, and procaine penicillin now is adding vitamin B₁₂ and vitamin B₁₂-procaine penicillin combination.

Lobby Groups Report

FARM LOBBY GROUPS ranked fourth—following “business,” “employees,” and “citizens” groups—in the amount of money spent in 1952 according to reports submitted under the lobby act of 1946. The farm groups spent only \$356,614 last year, as compared with \$1,281,785 for 1951. But their total is well behind the business groups' bill of \$2,215,591 for 1952. National Milk Producers Federation was fourth ranking single spender last year with a total of \$219,837—up \$34,521 over the year before.

Import Upswing

IMPORTS OF FERTILIZERS and fertilizer materials took a sharp leap upward early this year despite large domestic production. The totals were 176,000 tons in January and 238,000 tons in February. By contrast fertilizer imports averaged only 167,000 tons a month during 1951 and 157,000 tons in 1952. Shortages in some nitrogen products here are believed to have contributed to the larger arrivals. The February imports had a value of about \$11,300,000.

New England Pesticides

CONSTRUCTION of the first complete chemical processing plant for herbicides and pesticides in New England will cut about 48 hours from source-to-user shipping schedules. The Northeastern Chemical Corp.'s new Westbrook, Maine, plant, at the outset a single-level multi-purpose plant, will serve only the reprocessing industry, but the production of agricultural chemicals later will be expanded to include other industrial and specialty chemicals. Initial capacity is estimated at 20 tons of dry products and 5000 gallons of liquid per day: weed, grass, and brush killers, plus a wide range of liquid and powdered agents for combating insects and crop diseases.

Pricklypear Knockout

ANYBODY IN THE Southwest troubled with the Lindheimer pricklypear cactus will be glad to know that the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station has found a way to get rid of it. They say that they can effectively control mature plants and sprout regrowth with 2,4,5-T ester at 0.6 to 1.0% acid equivalent in oil and 1:1 oil-water sprays. Cost is about 1.5 cents a plant, making the method economically feasible for localized areas of relatively small plants. Application of the ester to another Gulf Coast Prairie nuisance, the huisache tree, is an effective killer at 1.1 cents a tree.

Fresh Food Trend

IMPROVEMENTS in packaging materials and methods, particularly those involving plastics films, are reversing a trend toward the completely precooked and “practically predigested” meals often forecast. Example: In Texas Rio Grande Valley more than half the carrot crop is packaged in polyethylene film today, as against 15% two years ago. Farmers integrate digging schedules with packaging operations, eliminating tops in picking. Carrot tops, which formerly served housewives as a barometer of freshness, are now discarded, since they are known to draw nutritive food value from the carrot itself in order to remain fresh.