

Ag and Food NEWSLETTER

Quack Grass Herbicide

MALEIC HYDRAZIDE, originally developed to slow the growth of grass and prevent sprouting of vegetables in storage, seems now destined for a future as a herbicide. Experiments at the University of Wisconsin demonstrated that maleic hydrazide could be applied to growing quack grass which is subsequently plowed under, to be followed by a vegetable crop such as corn, planted immediately. Previously, herbicide-treated quack grass required several plowings and a year to elapse before the treated areas would be safe for crops.

Boron Pollution Problem?

INTEREST IN BORON POLLUTION of underground waters is being sparked by a study recently completed by the Fruit Growers Laboratories for the Water Pollution Board in Ventura, Calif. As we go to press the board is meeting (to decide whether to publish the report or not). Traces of the element at levels of $\frac{1}{2}$ part per million are seriously toxic to citrus fruit trees. At 2 p.p.m. most plants are harmed. Many citrus packing plants use boric acid in wash water to prevent fungus on packed fruit. This wash water is discarded into streams and fields where it enters the ground water. Also, heavy overpumping of ground water for irrigation purposes leads to upward flow of deep waters which generally have a high boron content. The degree of boron pollution and its extent are, as yet, unknown.

Chemicals in Foods Hearings

SHOULD CHEMICALS used in foods and pesticides be lumped together as far as regulations concerning their use is concerned (Delaney bill) or should tailored regulations be devised for each major category (Miller bills) (AG & FOOD, April 1, page 19; May 13, page 289)? The House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee will hold two days of hearings on this subject next week. The committee will also spend two days considering new legislation on food standards and misbranding of foods. No new legislation is probable in the present session but the testimony will help the committee in its consideration of the problem during adjournment.

Chemical Food Additives

SERIOUS ATTENTION, both formal and informal, was given to the matter of chemical additives to food during the recent meeting of the Institute of Food Technologists (see page 546) in Boston. With the new legislation being considered much talk turned to what the industry should do to avoid controversies and lengthy hearings which cause a lot of public misunderstanding. We heard interesting comments favoring the idea of an industry board or other organization set up to deal with all problems concerned with food safety. The council of the IFT passed a resolution endorsing the Hale bill (H.R. 5055) as it is understood by the council. This bill would modify the present law to permit the definition of standards without a formal hearing, where there is no controversy. The resolution was sent to the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce.

Ammonia Fertilizers Rise

UREA AMMONIA liquors and ammonia solutions have apparently joined the general price advance for fertilizer materials. Tank-car quantities of the materials have moved up \$8 per ton for the former while the solutions are up \$5. Straight urea containing 46% N recently has been raised \$12 per ton. All of these upturns are probably the result of the tight situation in anhydrous ammonia (see page 586). Prices on ammonium nitrate and coke oven ammonium sulfate have also recently advanced.

Cotton in California

WHILE THE BATTLE regarding cotton acreage quotas for 1954 wages in the agricultural committees of Congress, nature is taking a hand in cotton production, at least in California, where unfavorable weather early this summer slowed growth to a walk. Growers there say there may be as much as a 10% drop from the peak production of last year's crop of 1.8 million bales. Others not so pessimistic admit that the cotton crop is several weeks late, but are inclined to take a "wait and see" attitude regarding final production.

Waterproof Bag

A TRULY WATER-RESISTANT multi-wall paper bag was exhibited at the American Seed Trade Association meeting in New York last week. Of special interest to fertilizer formulators, the bag consisted of a core mixture of resin, reclaimed rubber, and asphalt. During the time it was exhibited, water poured upon it from a tap. When the bag was opened, the fertilizer contents were undampened. The sponsor, Arkell, claims the bag is equally effective for packaging pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and related products.

Vitamin A for X Disease

HIGH DOSAGES OF VITAMIN A have been successful in pulling calves through X Disease, hyperkeritosis. The results of some recent research on the disease were reported at a recent meeting of the American Dairy Science Association. The relationship between vitamin A and X Disease is apparently still unknown. However, in cases where it was diagnosed at an early stage the vitamin seemed to help calves recover from hyperkeritosis. The researchers stressed the fact that vitamin A does not cure or prevent the disease.