

Pesticides and Wildlife

IT IS TRUE in agriculture as elsewhere that with progress come problems. Of the industries serving agriculture, few have felt so heavily the truth of this statement as has the pesticides industry. Other than the strictly economic problems, that of residues has been perhaps the most nagging. The Miller Amendment has been an admirable step toward protection against the sword that has hung so precariously over the future of the industry.

But the Miller Amendment even when functioning at its best will not provide a complete and perfect suit of armor. It leaves a number of openings and vulnerable spots. Desiccants and defoliants, for example, are not subject to regulation under the Miller Amendment, as they do not come under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act. At the moment, this is not showing any signs of being troublesome, but it needs attention in order to foresee and prevent any complications that might arise.

Wildlife protection (page 393) is another area that is particularly sensitive and subject to sensationalism. Clearly there are possibilities here for making a propaganda case against the producers and users of pesticides as crass and cynical desecrators of our fauna. Detailed information and sound evaluation of the situation is not easily developed on short notice and is not likely to be readily accepted after accusations have been publicized. The time to marshal the facts is now.

It is pleasing to find that some action is being taken, both in the U. S. and abroad. Two studies under the auspices of official bodies have been made. Both have suggested that no further restrictive legislation is called for. But both have pointed out that the protection of wildlife needs constant and careful attention in order to minimize damage. Permanent committees have been recommended for study and recommendations. Such a step, in addition to stimulating research and exchange of information, establishes publicly the interest in wildlife protection and presents an authoritative source of factual information.

Some state game and conservation departments not only have studied the problem but also actually

are using chemical herbicides to increase game in some areas. We learned only recently of work in Michigan on brush control that improved the deer browse so markedly that the deer population in the treated area increased almost unbelievably.

The matter is not being entirely neglected by pesticides producers. Some are cooperating with state conservation departments or doing investigations on their own, in order to be able to advise the users of their products.

The protection of wildlife from harm by pesticidal chemicals is a matter we cannot afford to neglect. Already enough is known to show that damage is not tremendous and that it can be held to a level of no great significance. Furthermore, wildlife is benefiting from pesticides use. The industry will do well to see that the public is effectively informed of these facts.

The Spencer Award

THE CHARLES F. SPENCER AWARD in agricultural and food chemistry now has become established. Last year was its first and the choice of Ralph M. Hixon, as the recipient, merited approval of those acquainted with this field.

Nominations again are being sought (page 398) and should be given the careful consideration of workers in the broad field of eligibility. The nomination and selection of scientists who have made the greatest contributions in the field should stimulate high endeavor. This was the stated purpose of Kenneth Spencer in founding the award in his father's memory.

One of the factors in attracting the most capable people into scientific pursuits is public recognition of the value and significance of the contributions of the research worker. Through awards designed to recognize this type of contribution, the scientists have an opportunity, if they will take action, to see that acclaim can come to the man who may have spent his life being quietly effective in bettering our lot. Nominations for this award deserve active attention and the time needed to present them well.