Scientist Assails DDT Myths

The supposed worldwide distribution of DDT raises some questions of credibility, according to University of Minnesota soil scientist Russell Adams, Jr.

"Pesticides such as DDT are normally used over limited areas," Adams says. "For them to be distributed all over the globe would require some means of transport, either by atmospheric or water routes.

"Most pesticides used eventually reach the soil by direct application, or they are washed from plants by rain. Much of the pesticide reaching the soil is then broken down by micro-organisms or it reacts chemically with soil moisture.

"Under the right conditions, DDT may bind itself to soil particles. But because DDT doesn't dissolve easily in water or cling to soil particles too readily, it often escapes into the air as a vapor. Once it reaches the atmosphere, DDT is often destroyed by the sun's ultraviolet rays."

"If DDT is truly present in the Antarctic snowcap, the only way it could have arrived there is through the atmosphere. But neither the mechanisms of atmospheric distribution nor the stability of pesticides in the atmosphere has been studied well enough outside the laboratory to make any firm conclusions," he says.

Adams feels that most of the current confusion over pesticide residues may be directly connected with the development of sophisticated sensing devices. Instruments such as the gas chromatograph can easily detect much lower levels of pesticide than is through the atmosphere. But neither the mechanisms of atmospheric distribution nor the stability of pesticides in the atmosphere has been studied well enough outside the laboratory to make any firm conclusions," he says.

Adams feels that most of the current confusion over pesticide residues may be directly connected with the development of sophisticated sensing devices. Instruments such as the gas chromatograph can easily detect much lower levels of pesticide than are sometimes unable to single out and measure natural compounds when the man-made chemicals are also present. This fact has been known for years. Yet some pesticide analysts still appear to be unaware of it.

"A number of other compounds that are easily confused with DDT have been detected in birds and fish. These compounds are commonly used in petroleum products, rubber, coolants, and several other materials. They are reported to be toxic to wildlife and they affect the calcium metabolism of birds. Yet DDT continues to receive all the blame. "Since these compounds resist chemical breakdown and are used extensively, some early findings that pointed to widespread DDT contamination are open to question."

New Management Announced For Landscape Contractors

Thomas O. Lied, president of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America has announced the selection of Executives Consultant, Inc., Washington, D.C., to manage the 300-member national trade organization.

The newly appointed executive director of ALCA is Walter M. Kiplinger, Jr., an ECI partner and former public information director for the National Recreation and Park Association and editor of PARKS & RECREATION magazine.

Executive Consultants, Inc., currently manages six national trade associations, among them the American Society of Landscape Architects.

ALCA will maintain offices in Washington's Southwest Building until the first of the year. Headquarters will then move into ECI facilities at 2011 Eye Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.