

GLOBE, ARIZ., 2,4,5-T CAPER

Much Ado About Nothing

Herbicides applied to control brush in the Tonto National Forest were not responsible for most of the injury to plants, any injury to animals, and may have been associated with one minor case of human illness reported in the nearby Globe, Ariz., area last year, a panel of scientists concluded in a U. S. Department of Agriculture study.

The report is the result of an on-site inspection last February by the panel and subsequent laboratory analyses of soil and animal tissue samples collected in the Globe area in addition to the herbicides used on the spray project. The investigation was undertaken in response to charges of damage from the spraying raised by citizens in the area after the herbicide silvex and some 2,4,5-T, together with small quantities of diluted 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, were aerially applied by the Forest Service in June 1969 to control chaparral on 1,900 acres in the Kellner Canyon-Russell Gulch section of the Pinal Mountains.

The investigating panel consisted of scientists from the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Health, Education, and Welfare, and from the National Academy of Sciences, with observers from the Office of Science and Technology and the Arizona Extension Service.

The report stated that the deformity seen in the goat and duck examined in the Globe area were not the result of the chemicals used in the spraying project. The deformed goat, born about five years prior to the 1969 spraying, was caused by severe nutritional deficiency. The duck, hatched four miles away from the site of herbicide application, had a slipped tendon. This condition is not uncommon in fowl and it could not have been caused by the 1969 spray because hatching started before spray application.

"Human illnesses reported were those that occur commonly in a normal population," the panel said, pointing out that it had contacted nine of the 13 physicians serving the Globe area in the course of the investigation. The only case of human illness that

may be related to the spraying is eye irritation and skin rash in one individual who had steam-cleaned herbicide barrels for the Forest Service in previous years, it was indicated.

The report said that some herbicide damage to vegetation occurred on private property near the spray project either from direct overflight or from drift. However, insects, disease, woodpeckers or sapsuckers, low soil moisture, and air pollution from a nearby copper smelter were also said to be contributing factors to the plant damage observed in the Globe area.

Many of the original allegations of injury from the spraying were related to the possible presence of a contaminant, tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin, in the chemicals used in the project. Analysis of the silvex used in the spraying, and some of the 2,4,5-T, showed that only very low amounts—less than 0.5 parts per million (ppm)—were present. The soil samples taken from spillage areas on the heliports contained silvex but no 2, 4,5-T, and less than 0.2 ppm of the dioxin. No silvex or 2,4,5-T residues were detected in liver and muscle tissues from an animal slaughtered shortly after the spraying.

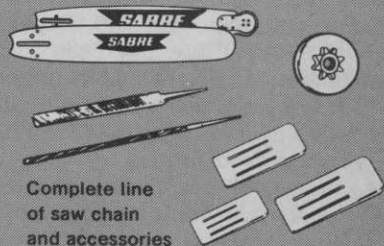
The chaparral control project in the Pinal Mountains of the Tonto National Forest was initiated in 1965 by the Forest Service with the approval of the Federal Committee on Pest Control. The objectives of the program were to manipulate dense brush cover so as to increase water yield and improve soil stability, improve wildlife habitat, increase livestock forage, reduce fire hazard, and provide better recreational opportunities for hikers, campers, and hunters.

After citizens protested, the chaparral project was suspended Oct. 16, 1969, pending a re-examination of all environmental aspects.

The investigating panel was headed by Dr. Fred H. Tschirley, Assistant Chief for Crops Protection Research, Agricultural Research Service, Beltsville, Md.



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