

"LEFT ARM" DERMATITIS

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Control of mold on fruit in storage is a problem with the packers of apples and pears which are produced in large quantity in Washington and Oregon. For this purpose the most effective material found to date is 2-chloro 6-phenyl phenol. Used only experimentally in 1947, it was employed extensively in the 1948 packing season. This chemical, under the trade name of *Stop Mold*, is supplied to the packers in the form of a 40-percent-by-weight solution of its sodium salt.

In the packing sheds fruit is processed by passing through a wash tank for removal of dirt and spray residues. It next passes through a rinse tank and water spray from which it is customarily discharged onto the sorting tables for grading and sizing before being packed. The fungicide may be applied to the fruit either in the wash tank or in the rinse tank although practice has been to use the former. Here the chemical usually is dissolved to give a 0.6 percent or less by weight solution. This is about one-half the strength suggested by the supplier. Correspondence with the Agricultural Experiment Station at Oregon State College disclosed that their tests have shown this treatment leaves less than a 0.5 parts per million residue of the material on the fruit, mostly in the calyx. Other tests indicate this is insignificant as compared with the amounts which will cause symptoms of toxicity from ingestion.

Use of the material in the packing sheds, however, has not been without difficulties. First indications of this reached this section from a local health officer who had received a complaint from a sorter in a packing shed in his area. This person had contracted a dermatitis which she attributed to the chemical.

While this was being investigated, reports of occupational diseases referred to this office from the Insurance Division of the Department of Labor and Industries have uncovered to date 50 more cases of dermatitis from use of the material. This probably is but a fraction of the actual number which have

occurred, since undoubtedly claims are not made in many instances. In fact, one local physician who was consulted advised that he personally had seen about 20 cases, none of which was reported in the claims received at this office. While a few packers had experienced difficulty, the majority of the cases of dermatitis were in persons employed as sorters. These people were exposed to the material on the wet apples coming from the rinse and sprays onto the sorting tables. Most of the dermatitis originated on the worker's arm and probably was the result of guiding the fruit as it rolled along the sorting table by reaching out and drawing it to one side in the curve of the arm. In one locality this practice resulted in sufficient number of cases reaching one physician that he has named the difficulty "left arm dermatitis."

There have also been some indications of irritation of the eyes and mucosa from breathing vapors of the material. In addition, reports of nausea and headache from this cause have been noted. Apparently, such symp-

toms have been confined to workers in the vicinity of wash tanks where ventilation has been inadequate to remove the phenolic odors.

It is unfortunate that the difficulties with the material did not come to the attention of this section until too late in the packing season to be of much assistance in preventing the trouble this year. Investigations, however, have indicated that a major factor in the dermatitis was probably failure either to appreciate or follow needed safeguards. It is believed attention to personal hygiene as well as proper use and maintenance of protective garments should provide good control. The difficulties from the vapors probably can be eliminated by a moderate amount of general ventilation. The manufacturer of the chemical is cooperating with this section to work out a program for educating users of the material in the need for and enforcement of effective control measures.

YALE TO AID INDUSTRY IN ALCOHOLISM FIGHT

A new consultant service to assist industry with the problems of alcoholism among its employees has been established under the expansion program of the Yale Plan Clinic. The work will be confined to the Eastern States during its first year.

The clinic aims to aid industry in determining the extent of alcoholism within a company, particularly in the early or incipient form, which is usually not apparent.

Through the service, industries will be assisted in evaluating the loss in dollars and production, as well as in employee morale resulting from alcoholism.

"The alcoholic in industry is not the broken-down derelict of the city streets," officials of the clinic assert. "He is the laborer in the yard, the skilled worker in the factory, the salesman, the clerk, the executive."

The clinic will make available educational information on such subjects as the distinction between drinking and alcoholism, and the nature and early symptoms of the malady. Suggestions will also be provided for its alleviation and possible prevention.

D. J. Birmingham, M. D. USPHS, comments: "This is a good case report with regard to occupational dermatitis in the apple-packing industry. Work done by the dermatoses investigation group during the war showed that many of the fungicides are capable of causing an eruption on the skin. This particular agent—2-chloro 6-phenyl phenol—was found to be a sensitizer. However, it is not a marked sensitizer. It can be handled if proper precautions, such as protective clothing, are used.

"It would be interesting should a future outbreak result from handling this compound, to patch test the affected individuals in an effort to verify whether or not the fungicide is the actual offending agent.

"If the program of prevention is carried out as set forth by the writer future outbreaks of occupational dermatitis should be averted."