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THE BASIS OF COLLEGE RECOMMENDATIONS ON  
ORCHARD MOUSE CONTROL IN NEW YORK

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Dr. Byers is to be commended for assembling the very wide array of interests represented at this Symposium. It is a unique opportunity to inform others who are concerned about our problems, our products, and our work methods. We share a common goal of wanting to do a better job, whether for increased profits, orchard protection, or for professional accomplishment. Being better informed should help all of us.

We all depend heavily upon the advice of others, in making our day-to-day decisions. Months, and perhaps years, before the first ounce of a new rodenticide is used by an orchardist, a series of successful "convincings" must occur. A market analyst must convince his company that a new rodenticide is needed and that a suitable market exists. The company's researchers must convince management that their candidate rodenticide has potential worth exploring. Perhaps researchers outside the company then convince management that outside research services would be beneficial. Researchers must then convince regulatory agencies that the new rodenticide is effective against target rodents and safe for the user, the consumer, and the environment. When the rodenticide is finally marketed, the orchardist must then be convinced that it will be to his advantage to use the new product instead of others. Each step is crucial to continuation of the process --- unless persuasive communication occurs at each step, the process ends at that point.

I would like to elaborate a bit on the last step in this communication process --- the step which persuades a grower to use Brand X. Certainly the specialists in commercial advertising have great expertise and exert a strong influence on consumer decision-making. In the field of commercial agriculture, another strong influence is provided by Cooperative Extension. Extension has no tangible product for sale, its product is advice and information. Our College of Agriculture is charged in its charter with the responsibility of making recommendations. These recommendations must be made on a factual basis, in recognition of our responsibility to all the taxpayers of the state.

Unfortunately, those of us who must make pesticide recommendations for the College have no mystical powers to help make the choices; we must rely upon hard evidence in the form of research data. Our recommendations are based whenever possible on at least three to five years of research under New York conditions. This is becoming increasingly difficult.

Twenty years ago, when there were only a few orchard rodenticides, most of us then in the business of making recommendations had first-hand research experience with all of the available baits. A major question then was whether to use oats or corn or apple cubes as the carrier for zinc phosphide rodenticide. Now, however, we are in a new ballgame,

with several new orchard rodenticides and others in various stages of developmental research.

In many Experiment Stations, the backup funding for research is dropping off. As a result, we are faced with the necessity of doing less developmental research work, from state funding sources. Some alternatives are obvious. Industry could support more of this type of work at Experiment Stations. Industry could also make a more concerted effort to provide research data to those College specialists who must make decisions about College pesticide recommendations. Both of these steps would be helpful in reaching our mutual goals.

Our College has a functional relationship with biologists of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, formalized by a Memorandum of Understanding. For recommendations on wildlife damage control, we rely heavily upon the research results published by that organization. We are fortunate, too, to have on our campus a Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit, which conducts research on orchard rodents. We will hear about some of this in tomorrow morning's session.

Cornell has a long history of research interest in orchard mouse control. Dr. W. Robert Eadie, now retired, developed the zinc-phosphide-treated cracked corn bait in the late 1940's. This bait is now used in orchards country-wide. Apples are an important crop in New York; I believe we rank second only to Washington State, in apple production. On an area basis, our principal target rodent is Microtus. Pitymys (pine mice) are of economic importance only in some orchards of the Hudson Valley.

We look forward to further refinements in methods and materials for controlling orchard mice and would be pleased to have factual information from any source, which would be helpful in making recommendations through Extension Service channels. We will be pleased to recommend those registered materials which prove to be effective when used under New York orchard conditions.

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