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THE VOLE CONTROL PROGRAM THAT IS TOO EXPENSIVE

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THE VOLE CONTROL PROGRAM THAT IS TOO EXPENSIVE

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It is an honor to be invited to make a presentation to such a knowledgeable group. I bring greetings from Fred Frederickson, President of Byrd and Frederickson, in Timberville, Virginia.

We have had some success for the past two years in controlling voles on a commercial scale at our orchards in Virginia. For years, vole control would vary from not acceptable to marginal control using various cultural methods and using ground sprays, such as Endrin and Chlorophacinone. In the past two years we have enjoyed acceptable control which must be credited to Dr. Ross Byers and his work with various baits and methods of applying baits. Immediately after harvest two years ago, we placed a Chlorophacinone bait in an active run under each tree and covered it with a slab of wood. Where trees had no activity, a slab alone was left in a non-herbicided area under the tree. Therefore, every tree had a slab whether infested or not. One month later, we checked each slab of wood for activity and added two more ounces of bait where activity was noticed. A year later after harvest, we checked each slab and baited where there was activity and then checked again after thirty days.

I'm wondering now, how long will such good control last. I expect this type of control will work until resistance builds up or until labor becomes unavailable. I would feel more comfortable if the industry would have two chemicals that would be effective and economical as a ground spray or a bait that we can broadcast. If we had two chemicals, we could switch from one to the other and reduce possible resistance build-up against either chemical. We need to look for a ground spray so our labor can be free to trim, etc. Men dislike baiting for mice and some day we might not get people to bait mice even if they are on the payroll.

Mouse control, as I have outlined and as Dr. Byers has engineered, is expensive. Labor and material costs jump from year to year, but what is more expensive is the mouse control program that didn't work. What we cannot afford is reduced production or an empty tree space in the orchard.