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THE HUDSON VALLEY'S EXPERIENCE SECURING ENDRIN FOR USE
IN 1977

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The year 1977 was eventful for Hudson Valley fruit growers who are troubled by pine voles. In March when the snows melted it was clearly evident that serious vole damage to area orchards had taken place and immediate action was necessary to eradicate this menace. Cooperative Extension played a major leadership role organizing grower committee activities, and the North Eastern Fruit Council, a newly formed grower group, represented the industry during these activities. Steve Clark, a Milton, New York fruit grower, was chosen as chairman of the North Eastern Fruit Council grower action committee.

Our first move was to alert the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) of the seriousness of the situation and explain to them what our needs were. Because of the seriousness of the problem and the need for immediate control in the fall, securing Endrin for use was our primary goal. At the same time we were also interested in stimulating a more vigorous research program than what was presently being funded.

Mr. Burel Lane, Director of Plant Industries with the NYSDAM, became a good friend and assisted us as we prepared our case. Numerous preparatory meetings were held and considerable homework done. Finally a tour of damaged orchards and to our surprise an E.P.A. RPAR hearing was scheduled. The tour was arranged to compliment the impact of the hearing. One interesting side-light concerning the involvement of the E.P.A. is that we were petitioning the DEC to remove Endrin from its restricted useage list and were surprised to learn of E.P.A.'s interest in our problem when Endrin is federally labelled. We learned of E.P.A.'s involvement only a few days before the hearing was to be held and frantically began alerting others in neighboring states who we thought were interested in the future of Endrin. This hearing, we were told, was to be one of only two hearings that E.P.A. planned to hold as part of their RPAR investigation of Endrin; in other words, the future of Endrin label was at stake. The response was tremendous and people as far away as North Carolina testified. Many of these people are here today.

Our New York presentation at the hearing was designed to emphasize the damage and economic impact done by the pine voles. We were fortunate to have on our team several experts who were able to access this impact.

Mrs. Karen Pearson who spoke last year at this Symposium on her Master Thesis, "Some Economic Aspects of Pine Vole Damage in Apple Orchards of New York State", was asked to up-date her survey work done for her thesis and also to do a detailed survey of several orchards that were severely damaged last winter. This information was presented at the hearing. Also, Mr. Ralph Lawrence, Regional Extension Specialist in Fruit Farm Management and Marketing for Eastern New York, was asked to take Mrs. Pearson's survey results and develop a hearing presentation that would look at the economic impact of the pine vole to those orchards that were damaged. I would like to quote a paragraph from Mr. Lawrence's testimony. This excerpt will give you an idea of the type of economic information Mr. Lawrence was able to present to E.P.A. I believe this type of information was very meaningful and impacted greatly on their investigation.

"Block I on Farm A in Dutchess County is a 15 year old Tydeman's Red block. The orchard run price received for the apples from this block in 1976 was \$5.40 per bushel. The computation done here assumes an average price of \$4.00 per bushel. This block currently shows 59% of the trees 100% girdled. This reduces the yield from 517 bushels per acre to 212 bushels per acre, and results in an annual loss of income of \$946 per acre after deducting growing and harvesting expenses. Over a ten year period the net present value of that permanent loss is \$6,348 per acre. In spite of the fact that without pine vole damage this orchard and the following orchards would be a viable economic units for more than 10 more years, I have limited the analysis to 10 years, assuming that a replacement orchard could be approaching full production by then.

Block II on Farm A is an 18 year old Red Delicious block. Using an average orchard run price of \$3.50 per bushel rather than the \$5.00 actually received this year, the annual net loss is \$1,128 per acre. The net present value of this loss over a ten year period is \$7,569 per acre."

The orchard tour that proceeded the Endrin hearing was very important to our plan of attack. We felt that we had to show to what extent pine vole can damage and were damaging our orchards. Seeing is believing was never more true than that day in those many orchards we visited with freshly girdled trees. We even went so far as to remove trees so that girdled trunks and roots could be more closely examined. One of these tree stumps was presented as evidence at the following day's hearing. My feeling is that this orchard tour did our case as much good as the presentation made at the hearing. We had small buses for transportation and enough growers on the tour so that no visitors were left "unattended".

The DEC representatives were present on the tour and at the E.P.A. hearing, however, they were not able to accept the E.P.A. hearing as official for State purposes, therefore, the State set-up its own hearing for early August. This was an abbreviated hearing and merely a formality to satisfy State requirements.

Our homework had been done and presented at both Federal and State hearings and it was now a matter of waiting for a decision from the DEC. E.P.A.'s decision was hoped for before the State had to make its own independent decision, but as the hour got close all E.P.A. was saying was that it was continuing to review the data. Word from E.P.A. was that their review of the hearing data was favorable. The State waited until the zero hour, but finally made a decision in favor of the fruit industry. The announcement read and I quote,

"Thursday, September 22, 1977

Commissioner of Environmental Conservation Peter A. Berle today announced that he has approved a highly restricted, one-time use of Endrin this fall as a 'stopgap measure' to combat pine voles, a major threat to the \$18 million apple industry in the lower Hudson Valley.

Commissioner Berle set the following restrictions upon the use of Endrin:

- Use is being permitted only for the fall of 1977.
- Use only in orchards with obvious pine vole damage and not as a preventative.
- Applicants must attend an approved training session on the use of Endrin before applying for a permit, pass a written examination and be certified as competent to use restricted pesticides.
- Endrin be applied only after the area to be treated has been harvested, including the collection of drops."

This was a very difficult and courageous decision for Commissioner Berle to make. One particular incident made it even more difficult since the department was threatened by a suit from the State's Audubon Society if it allowed the use of Endrin. But, other than this threat, and that's all it turned out to be, there was no other public outcry against the one time use of Endrin under these restricted conditions. One or two local papers including the New York Times carried challenging articles, but no serious consequences were felt. Even at the hearings little was heard from Environmental and Save The Earth Groups. One or two groups were present at the hearings and they did express concern about the use of Endrin, but they were sympathetic about the vole problem and agreed something

had to be done. Endrin seemed to be the only stopgap measure that would work to solve the immediate problem.

These groups including the Ulster County Federated Sportman's Club, plus Commissioner Berle in his Endrin Release Statement have all said that the real solution to the vole problem lies not with Endrin, but with research to find a long term environmentally safe control program. Hopefully this symposium today will help stimulate greater funding, so we can get on with this needed **research**.

The DEC in an effort to increase the knowledge base concerning the environmental impact of such pesticides as Endrin, undertook an ambitious monitoring program. Samples before, after, and at future dates of treatment were taken and will be taken of water, soil, soil organisms, orchard plant life, fish, and wildlife. To date, results of this monitoring program are not available. Apparently, there has been a delay with the analytical work, but once this monitoring program report is published it should provide extremely interesting information and have a far reaching impact on our future thinking.

Throughout this presentation, I have indicated that we in New York, like you, are very interested in encouraging more research. In New York the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has agreed to support a full-time wildlife control technician to be located at the Hudson Valley Lab. We are also hopeful that a full-time wildlife biologist can be hired to also work at the Lab. Funding for the biologist position is still in question. Possibly federal funds, USDA or USDI, can be secured to aid in support of this position. This is what we in New York are working towards. At any rate, we are aggressively moving forward with respect to more research work, and we have the support of Cornell, the Geneva Experiment Station, the NYSDAM, and DEC. We are optimistic that this Symposium will add support to our efforts and that next year we can introduce two new pine vole research people from New York to the Symposium group here today.