

Traces of flame retardant found in falcon eggs in Maine, N.H. Groups seek ban on chemical Deca:[All Edition]

KEVIN MILLER, OF THE NEWS STAFF. Bangor Daily News. Bangor, Me.:Mar 22, 2007. p. 1

Abstract (Summary)

Sweden prohibits the use of [Deca] and other flame retardants in the polybrominated diphenyl ether family. Deca is commonly used in televisions, computers and other household products.

Wing Goodall, a research biologist with the BioDiversity Research Institute in Gorham who analyzed the peregrine egg data, acknowledged that Deca's effects on lab mice could differ from its effects on wild birds. Because concern about Deca is so new, there has been very little study on its effects on wildlife, he said.

"High levels of toxic Deca are showing up in our endangered peregrine falcons, and that is bad news for Maine's wildlife," Matt Prindiville, NRCM's toxics project director, said in a statement. "This new study provides yet another reason that legislators should vote to keep toxic Deca out of Maine homes and our environment."

Full Text (480 words)

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Maine environmental organizations are citing recent research on peregrine falcons from New England in their campaigns to ban a type of chemical flame retardant found in many household products.

In the first research of its kind in the U.S., a California researcher tested eight unhatched peregrine falcon eggs from New Hampshire and Maine for the presence of Deca, a flame retardant coming under increasing scrutiny in the state.

The eight eggs - seven from New Hampshire and one from Verona Island, Maine - contained levels of Deca that were, on average, more than eight times higher than levels found in peregrine falcon eggs in Sweden.

The levels were the highest ever recorded in bird eggs, although a very limited amount of research on Deca in birds has been conducted to date.

Sweden prohibits the use of Deca and other flame retardants in the polybrominated diphenyl ether family. Deca is commonly used in televisions, computers and other household products.

Deca becomes airborne in dust as the chemical degrades over time. Scientific studies have shown that Deca, when inhaled or ingested, accumulates in humans' fatty tissues and has been identified in breast milk.

The Legislature is considering a proposal from the state Department of Environmental Protection to ban the sale of televisions and other electronics equipment containing Deca beginning in 2012. Maine already has banned two related flame retardants.

Research conducted by staff at the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the University of Southern Maine found that newborn lab mice exposed to Deca exhibited brain development problems, including lower grip strength, decreased thyroid levels and learning problems

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But Goodall said the findings confirm that Deca accumulates in the bodies of birds. Peregrine falcons, which eat mostly other birds, are the world's swiftest mammals, capable of traveling faster than 200 mph while diving toward prey.

Representatives with the Environmental Health Strategy Center and the Natural Resources Council of Maine said the findings bolster their argument that Deca should be banned.

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Studies on nearly 100 other peregrine falcon eggs are still being conducted by the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences. The studies on the eight eggs from New Hampshire and Maine were conducted by Kim Hooper with the California Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Chemistry Lab.

Indexing (document details)

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