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ALVIN L. YOUNG, Major
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 1980

Woods (202) 755-0344

DIOXIN NOT
DETECTED IN
MOTHER'S MILK

The Environmental Protection Agency has found no detectable residues of the chemical dioxin (2,3,7,8 tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin, or TCDD) in 103 milk samples from nursing mothers in three western states. Dioxin, an extremely dangerous chemical, is an unavoidable component of the herbicides 2,4,5-T and Silvex which have been sprayed to control weeds and brush in forest areas, rights-of-way, rangeland and crops for many years.

The samples were obtained from 105 mothers selected from areas in California, Oregon and Washington where the dioxin-containing herbicides were known to have been used for several years. EPA has notified each mother who participated in the survey of the test results.

Dioxin has caused birth defects and miscarriages in laboratory animals, including monkeys, at the lowest possible dosage, and has caused cancer in other laboratory animals at low levels. Most uses of 2,4,5-T and Silvex were temporarily halted by EPA last Spring when scientists found a statistical correlation between the spraying of 2,4,5-T in a forested area of Oregon and an above normal rate of miscarriages in the same area. Hearings to determine whether or not 2,4,5-T and Silvex will be permanently banned from use begin February 13, 1980 in Washington, D.C.

Milk samples from nursing mothers individually selected by the Agency were taken in November, 1977. The number of samples breaks down as follows:

2,4,5-T - sprayed areas: California ----- 20
Humbolt County (16)
Hendocino County (4)

Oregon ----- 20
Lane County (6)
Lincoln County (8)
Douglas County (2)
Benton County (2)
Marion County (1)
Polk County (1)

Washington ----- 18
Clallam County (17)
King County (1)

TOTAL -----
58

Control areas (not sprayed with dioxin-containing herbicides):

California ----- 22
Santa Cruz
County (22)

Alaska ----- 23
Greater Anchorage Area (13)
Kenai Peninsula (12)
(Two milk samples from
the Alaska control area
were lost in transit.)

TOTAL -----
45

EPA emphasized that no residues were detected using the most modern scientific equipment. This equipment is capable of measuring residues down to 1 to 4 parts per trillion. At this time, the technology does not exist to measure residues below that level. It is not known whether any dioxin is present below the limit of detection.

A report on the study will be available upon request in late January from the EPA Press Office (A-107), Washington, D.C. 20460.