# Polybrominated Biphenyls Encyclopedia Article

## Polybrominated Biphenyls

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# Polybrominated Biphenyls

A mixture of compounds having from one to ten **bromine** atoms attached to a biphenyl ring, analogous to polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)s. Manufactured as fire retardants, PBBs were banned after a 1973 Michigan incident when pure product was accidently mixed with cattle feed and distributed throughout the state. PBBs were identified as the cause of weight loss, decreased milk production, and **mortality** in many dairy herds. Approximately 30,000 cattle, 1.5 million chickens, 1,500 sheep, 6,000 hogs, 18,000 pounds (8,100 kg) of cheese, 34,000 pounds (15,300 kg) of dried milk products, 5 million eggs, and 2,700 pounds (1,215 kg) of butter were eventually destroyed at an estimated cost of $1 million. Although human exposures have been well-documented, long term epidemiological studies have not shown widespread health effects.