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Organochlorine Residues in Otter Spraints from Hungary

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During the Working Meeting of the European Section of the Otter Specialist Group in Hungary, an opportunity was taken to collect otter spraints for analysis for organochlorines. This was considered of interest because otters have disappeared from much of lowland Europe, but still appeared to thrive in Hungary, where arable agriculture appeared relatively intensive.

A large collection of spraints was made from the ledge of a bridge which was very heavily marked by otters. In the laboratory the collection was divided in four for extraction of fat and analysis by gas-liquid chromatography.

Table 1: Analysis Results

	DDE	PCB	Total OC
Mean	7.44	5.48	12.92
Range	1.31 - 12.90	3.42 - 7.78	7.56 - 18.27

Dieldrin and lindane were not detected.

These results can be compared with small samples of spraints analyzed from central Wales and Norfolk, U.K. Central Wales has an otter population which is generally thriving and the mean organochlorine concentration in spraints was 18.2 mg kg⁻¹ lipid, some 1.4 times higher than the mean for Hungary. Dieldrin, DDTs and PCBs were detected. In Norfolk, the otter population is highly endangered, the species being absent from most river catchments. The mean organochlorine load in spraints was 31.8 mg kg⁻¹ lipid, some 2.5 times higher than the mean in Hungary. Lindane, dieldrin, DDTs and PCBs were detected.

These results are based on small samples and are clearly preliminary, but the mean organochlorine load in spraints from the three populations is inversely related to our assessment of the size of these populations, based on spraint numbers. More detailed work in Britain is currently in progress; similar studies in Hungary could prove highly illuminating.