

Two Views On Deaths of Utah Sheep

Antelope Valley, Utah

Scientists ruled out atomic radiation yesterday as the cause of death of more than 1400 sheep in Utah's isolated Antelope Valley which lies 200 miles from the Atomic Energy Commission's Nevada test site.

Investigators blamed the deaths on a lethal weed.

"Based on our samplings, it was definitely Halogeton poisoning," said Dr. Wayne Binns of the Utah State University's poisonous plants laboratory who analyzed samples. Halogeton is an anxious weed poisonous to sheep that grows on western range land.

University of Utah biologist Dr. Robert Pendleton, who went to the juniper-covered valley Thursday to conduct tests for radioactivity, said: "Our tests are entirely negative for radiation. Our conclusion at this state is that radiation is not implicated." AEC specialists on the scene also said radiation was not to blame.

But ranchers in the sparsely-populated winter range land were not entirely convinced. Over six thousand sheep died in the area after a nerve gas test in 1968.

The 1400 sheep in the present die-off were pregnant ewes, in Antelope Valley for the winter.

United Press