

## Plastic cigar tips with saccharin start new storm

MONTREAL (CP) — How many cigars can a rat smoke a day?

The question arises because plastic cigar tips are sweetened with saccharin, although the recent ban on the sweetener doesn't apply to stogies.

But health protection department officials have advised two major Canadian cigar manufacturers, Imperial Tobacco Ltd. and MacDonald Tobacco Inc., to look for a substitute sweetener just to be on the safe side.

Tests showed that in an exaggerated case where a man "chews and chomps on the ends," a single mouth-piece is 300 times less hazardous than a soft drink containing saccharin, Imperial Tobacco president Robert Gibb said Wednesday.

The saccharin may be melted into the plastic cigar tip or used in the adhesive that seals the wrapper.

The equivalent for a medium-size man of the amount of saccharin eventually lethal to a rat is a daily dose of 175,000 mg. and after 20 cigar tips a "chomper" could have ingested at most 10 mg., Gibb said.

### Cyclamates

A ban on saccharin as a food additive was ordered earlier this year after federal health and welfare department tests found that high dosages of the sweetener caused bladder cancer in second-generation rats.

Diet soft drinks containing saccharin are to be removed from the market by Dec. 31.

Gibb said cigar tips are made with insoluble saccharin while government tests were run on the sweetener's soluble form. The additive is also sealed in plastic.

MacDonald president Robert Shropshire said his company started working on a replacement for the sweetener in early April and expects to have an alternative ready by September.

Imperial's research department is searching for a substitute now but the problem is to find an alternative acceptable to government officials, Gibb said.

Although a ban on cyclamates was recently lifted, "as long as they are under a cloud, we wouldn't touch them," Gibb said.

L.R. says I can't  
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