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FOREST PRODUCTS LABORATORY - U. S. FOREST SERVICE - MADISON, WISCONSIN

CHEMICAL REACTION AFFECTS CASEIN GLUE

Although casein glues are highly water-resistant, they ultimately decompose when exposed to a damp atmosphere for a long time. For many months studies have been under way at the Forest Products Laboratory to discover the cause of this decomposition.

The decomposition study is still far from complete, but the conclusion has been reached that the decomposition of ordinary alkaline casein glues is not due to the action of bacteria or molds. It appears to be due entirely to chemical action of the alkali in the glue. This conclusion is based upon the following observations:

Increasing the amount of alkali in the glue increases the rate of decomposition when the glue is kept wet.

Glues containing no sodium hydroxide, although deficient in some important respects, do not decompose as rapidly as similar glues containing sodium hydroxide.

Cultures of molds and bacteria could not be obtained from decomposed alkaline glues.

Some chemicals which have antiseptic properties are found to improve casein glue, but this improvement is due to their chemical action rather than to their toxic properties.

Glues can be completely decomposed in a short time at temperatures above that at which bacteria can grow.

Further work is being directed toward the production of glues which will resist chemical decomposition and at the same time be impervious to the action of fungi and bacteria as well as moisture.

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