

PUBLIC HEALTH

# Federal Health Service Worried Over Parrot Fever

## A Psittacosis Polly in the Parlor Is Termed as Dangerous as a Typhoid Mary in the Kitchen

**T**HE possibility of another parrot fever epidemic is worrying officials of the U. S. Public Health Service.

Regulations governing importation and interstate shipment of birds of the parrot family have to be tightened to prevent a repetition of the 1933 epidemic in which a number of lives were lost. No action has been taken yet, but it is being seriously considered.

The official alarm has grown out of discovery of three cases of the ailment in a family in Washington, D. C., acquired from two recently purchased love-birds. Public Health officials fear there may be many more unrecognized cases. The disease may be mistaken for influenza, pneumonia, or even typhoid fever until laboratory tests are made. It kills one out of every five patients, records from the 1933 epidemic show.

Scattered about the community are nearly 100 love-birds, any or all of which may be carrying the virus of this deadly disease because they were in the same flock with those which caused the three human cases. There may be more in other parts of the country.

Like the recently deceased Typhoid Mary, healthy woman who carried typhoid fever germs in her body and thus spread the disease, there is probably a Psittacosis Polly—a healthy old parrot or love-bird that carries the psittacosis virus and spreads it to other birds who in turn may spread it to humans. If there were only one Psittacosis Polly, it might not be hard to find the bird and thus eliminate the disease, but there are probably many such carriers that slip past the barriers of quarantine and other federal regulations now in force to prevent the spread of diseased birds. Six such carriers were found in the unsold part of the shipment from which the three human cases originated.

Baltimore, Pittsburgh and New York City have met the parrot fever menace by enacting embargoes prohibiting all birds of the parrot family. Connecticut, California, Maine, Minnesota and Oregon have embargoes prohibiting parakeets. Federal health officials are not yet ready to ask a nation-wide ban on all

birds of the parrot family. If the danger grows and no other way to check it can be found, such action may be necessary, however.

Meanwhile, federal health officials believe the public should know that a Psittacosis Polly in the parlor may be just as dangerous as a Typhoid Mary in the kitchen.

*Science News Letter, December 24, 1938*

Marriage of first cousins occurs in France in about one wedding in 100.

One movie cartoon producing studio uses a recording spectrophotometer to make sure the colors of faces and clothing of the characters remain the same throughout a picture.



**ATOMIC BIG GUN**

*This model of the new atom-smasher was shown at the annual exhibit of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. Part of the front wall is broken away, and the steel outer dome is represented by transparent plastic, so that all the "works" are easily visible. Making an adjustment is Dr. M. A. Tuve, of the Institution's department of terrestrial magnetism.*

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