

WILDLIFE—AGRICULTURE

Corn Shocks Waste Food

► CORN SHOCKS standing in the winter fields may be picturesque, but they are highly unprofitable. Field mice get too much of the corn before the farmer gets around to husking it.

Such at least is the evidence produced by a series of experiments carried out by J. P. Linduska of the Michigan State Department of Conservation.

Mr. Linduska set up ten experimental shocks of corn, in several typical farmland environments. He screened them to keep out game animals like rabbits, squirrels and pheasants, but left free access for field mice of several species. Finally, early in the spring, he removed the remaining corn and compared its weight with that of corn from similar shocks that had been kept free of feeding rodents all winter.

He found that the wild mice had eaten 17% of the corn in shocks set in open cornfields, and 46% in shocks set on sodded land, where conditions at the outset were favorable to the rodents. Worst destruction occurred in a shock placed near a marsh where one species was very numerous; here 85% of the corn was eaten.

The mice tended to move into the shocks and became permanent residents

for the winter. The average number of such rodent inhabitants was 1.5; largest in any one shock was 11. Winter breeding went on at a lively rate.

Mr. Linduska presents detailed results of his studies in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

Science News Letter, January 16, 1943

PUBLIC HEALTH

Increasing Death Rate Sign of Doctor Shortage

► A HINT that the doctor shortage is already affecting the national health picture may be found in the death rate for the nation's 88 largest cities. For the week ending Dec. 5, latest on which figures are available, this took a big jump, to 13.5 per 1,000, although there are no signs of any epidemics.

The increase was largely due to the mortality from the Boston night club fire, but correcting for this gives a death rate for the large cities of 12.8 per 1,000. The rate for the corresponding week in 1941 was 11.9 per 1,000, and the three-year average for the first week in December is also 11.9 per 1,000.

The death rate of 13.5 per 1,000 for the 88 large cities comes from the Cen-

sus Bureau, and is based on total number of deaths without regard to cause, age or other factors. The U. S. Public Health Service, however, gets weekly reports from 88 large cities on pneumonia and influenza deaths. These are not all the same cities as covered by the Census Bureau weekly report. Different cities are included in order to get a better geographic picture of the influenza-pneumonia situation. The death rate for influenza and pneumonia based on the reports from these cities is also running higher than the average for the past three years at this season.

Influenza cases reported by state health officers to the U. S. Public Health Service increased somewhat during the week ending Dec. 5, but neither the increase nor the total number of cases is large enough to indicate any epidemic.

With no epidemic and no reports so far of a more virulent type of pneumonia or influenza, the only suggested explanation for the increased death rate is lack of medical care resulting from the doctor shortage among civilians.

Science News Letter, January 16, 1943

GEOLOGY

Women to Be Trained As Petroleum Geologists

► WOMEN will be trained in petroleum geology by a specially designed one-year course starting at the University of Michigan next month.

Such women are needed to help develop new oil fields so important to the war effort.

Admission requirements to the concentrated program include a year's work in physical and historical geology and trigonometry, with a B average.

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