

Do You Know?

Rats on farms are costly; three of them will eat daily as much as two hens.

Cod-liver oil as a possible substitute for linseed oil in paints is being investigated in Norway.

The excess of *births over deaths* in the United States during 1945 indicates a population increase of 154 per hour.

New *action mechanism* in pianos is now constructed of magnesium and plastic materials; substituting magnesium for wood parts eliminates warping.

The *Big Dipper* swings completely around the North Star in 24 hours; the different positions of the Dipper in the sky during different seasons are due to stars rising earlier each day.

Fluorescent light tubes have proved superior to ordinary electric lights in luring Clear Lake gnats into traps; this bothersome pest, which breeds in enormous numbers, takes its name from the Clear Lake region of California.

Wood-waste utilization is a subject of special research at the University of New Hampshire; work is concentrated on plastics from sawdust, the use of lignin in plant-growing, and wood-yeast feeds for cattle and poultry.

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MEDICINE

New Approach to Checking Spread of Polio

➤ A NEW SLANT on how infantile paralysis spreads and a possible new approach to methods of checking its spread appeared in a report by Dr. Thomas Rivers of the Hospital of the Rockefeller Institute, New York, at the meeting of the American Medical Association in San Francisco.

Scrupulous personal cleanliness on the part of every one as well as care to protect food, milk and drinking water from flies would be the weapons for preventing the spread of polio, it appears from Dr. Rivers' report. With many other scientists, he believes that the infantile paralysis virus leaves the bodies of patients and healthy carriers in intestinal wastes, medically termed feces. Contact with the virus from this source, he believes, is how the next person gets infected.

Experience while serving with a Naval medical research unit on Guam during the war showed Dr. Rivers how easily the polio virus or other germs leaving the body in feces can spread.

The problem on Guam was hookworm, not infantile paralysis. But it convinced Dr. Rivers that "many persons and their clothes are invisibly but dangerously contaminated with feces.

"From a small cotton blanket on which an infant with hookworm had rested for 24 hours and which showed no visible evidence of fecal contamination, 20,000 infective hookworm larvae were obtained after the blanket had been kept in a moist condition for five days," Dr. Rivers reported.

The evidence from this apparently clean but bacteriologically dirty blanket helped the Navy doctors check hookworm. It may furnish a better weapon for fighting the spread of polio.

Flies may spread the polio virus as they carry typhoid fever germs. Dr. Rivers, however, does not think they play a major role in infantile paralysis. He debunked the idea of controlling polio by DDT sprayed from airplanes.

Spraying DDT from airplanes to kill flies to control infantile paralysis, he said, would do about as much good as spraying soapy water from planes for personal cleanliness.

Science News Letter, July 27, 1946



POTATO SEEDS—These potato balls look so much like miniature green tomatoes that when they appear in somebody's garden they usually start an excited report of a potato-tomato hybrid. Actually they are only the normal seed-containing fruit of the potato plant, as shown in this U. S. Department of Agriculture photograph, and are noteworthy only because of their rarity. Luther Burbank started his career by planting the seeds from some of these potato balls, and the one good plant that came up out of the crop became the famous Burbank potato.