

MEDICINE

Flyless City Gets Polio

Caldwell, Idaho, which wiped out its flies believed to transmit polio, had a recent outbreak of the disease. May provide answer to an unsolved question.

➤ TRAGIC outbreak of infantile paralysis in Caldwell, Idaho, has given a new answer to one of the unsolved questions about polio.

The question is: Do flies transmit infantile paralysis to human beings?

This community, like others throughout Idaho, has waged successful war on flies. A voluntary campaign directed by local and state authorities has used DDT to wipe out common houseflies, blowflies, cowflies, mosquitoes and earwigs—the latter a cockroach-like insect species assuming pest proportions in this region.

"We have no flies here," residents of Caldwell proudly tell visitors.

Scientists back this boast. They believe flies have been wiped out as a menace to health.

Yet two persons are dead, and new cases of polio in recent weeks have brought the total number of cases to 52 since July 10 in the area of this rural community of 8,700 persons.

This gives medical science the record of a major outbreak in a fly-free community.

"We have not considered flies a factor in the epidemic at Caldwell," State Health Officer L. J. Peterson states.

He adds that other approaches have also failed thus far. The outbreak came in a clean, sanitary area, in sharp contrast to conditions found in many past polio epidemics elsewhere.

A scientific report on the epidemic is being prepared by Dr. A. G. Gillum of the University of Michigan and Dr. A. J. Steigman of the University of Cincinnati under grants from the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. Now back in their laboratories, these scientists will conduct blood tests and other experiments with specimens collected in Caldwell. This work, requiring many months, may shed new light on this area's outbreak of polio.

When the scientists made a routine check on the fly population they were

amazed at how few could be found. Their report may help clear the fly as a polio carrier.

Science News Letter, October 11, 1947

BIOCHEMISTRY

Vegetable Diet Found For Streptomycin Mold

➤ YOU can look for a price cut before long in streptomycin, the mold chemical that your doctor may prescribe for you if you get tularemia (rabbit fever), tuberculosis, influenzal meningitis and some kidney, bladder and eye infections.

The price cut is expected because the mold that produces streptomycin is going on a low-cost diet. Like many humans this winter, the mold will be fed soybeans instead of meat for its protein.

Discovery of a soybean nutrient for use instead of a meat extract in streptomycin production was made by scientists at the A. E. Staley Company in Decatur, Ill.

How far the basic \$5 price for one-thirtieth of an ounce (one gram) can be cut is not known yet. But the new nutrient's cost to streptomycin producers is about one-tenth that of nutrients formerly used.

The new nutrient not only costs less but increases the yield of streptomycin. It is hoped that the increase in yield will be 100%, though the Staley Company says it is not yet practicable to specify even the approximate extent to which the yield may be increased.

More and cheaper streptomycin may even help bring down the price of human food. The mold chemical has been found effective, experimentally, against a number of serious diseases which annually inflict enormous losses in livestock and poultry. With the limited amount of streptomycin available heretofore, most of it has gone for treatment of human ailments. But with more of it available, veterinarians are expected to use large quantities.

Science News Letter, October 11, 1947

Cattle not worried by flies produce more *beef*; cattle sprayed with DDT are practically fly-free.

A *red sky* in the morning does not always mean that bad weather will follow.

Ground squirrels are the best known and most injurious rodents in California; they destroy crops, damage irrigation ditches, and carry disease.



NEW DIET—The two little piles show the new cheap meatless diet for raising the mold of streptomycin. The larger pile shows the soybean meal from which the new nutrient is made, and the smaller one shows the quantity of nutrient that can be made from it.