

VETERINARY MEDICINE

Pig Ill May Be Polio Clue

Dying pigs behind the Iron Curtain may contribute to the conquest of human polio because the new virus disease attacking them is similar to infantile paralysis.

► BECAUSE pigs in Czechoslovakia are dying of a new virus disease, similar to infantile paralysis in children, there is new hope that from this agricultural disaster will come understanding and perhaps a cure for human polio.

Seldom does a new disease appear in the world. Yet only about four years ago did scientists begin intensive study of this illness which had first appeared in 1931 in a country now behind the Iron Curtain.

It spread to neighboring lands. It took 150,000 pig lives in Czechoslovakia last year, a heavy toll of the swine population.

This new disease is Teschen disease, or porcine virus encephalomyelitis. Its short name comes from that of a Czech province. To veterinarians and farmers, it is a menace to livestock raising, to agriculture and to the food supply.

To medical men intent on fighting human disease, the important thing is that the new Teschen disease is the animal counterpart of infantile paralysis. It is spread by a virus, not a germ. It paralyzes the muscles of the pigs, just as in humans. A large portion of the animals die from paralysis because treatment after they get the disease is not practical. (See *SNL*, Oct. 2, 1948).

There are no iron lungs for pigs or hospitals to care for these ill animals. Ruthless slaughter of infected animals is the only preventive known. Czechoslovakian scientists also are working on vaccines to stop the disease.

To American farmers the new pig disease seems remote and perhaps unimportant. But there are hints that some cases of Teschen disease are occurring in North America. There are a few instances that look like the same kind of pig illness, although it is too early to be sure. Our animal disease fighters have been alerted.

To the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, with headquarters in Washington, Teschen disease is an important problem, despite the fact that it is prevalent in Soviet-dominated areas where investigations are likely to run into snags.

A meeting for planning the fight against Teschen disease and other important animal ills was held last fall in Warsaw by FAO and the invaded and menaced countries were represented, even Bulgaria, which is not a member of FAO. At present there is one FAO veterinary scientist in Poland assigned to this disease. Countries bordering Czechoslovakia have done a good job

in stopping by slaughter the spread of the disease into their areas. But little information about the situation has been circulated and American scientists have not realized the dangerous situation.

Neither has the opportunity to study this polio-like pig disease been seized yet by the investigators who are spending some of the dimes contributed by Americans honoring Franklin D. Roosevelt by supporting the infantile paralysis fight. When this new opportunity for research is realized, this new and promising possibility will undoubtedly be explored by sending medical research teams into the Teschen disease area.

So far the investigators of the animal disease are at a loss to know how Teschen disease is transmitted, whether insects play a part, whether diet is involved, whether some pigs have immunity and why. This is not surprising, because despite extensive research, little more is known about the human disease, infantile paralysis.

Dr. K. V. L. Kesteven, the FAO adviser on animal diseases, believes that if the problem of Teschen disease is solved, the conquest of polio would be speeded. Working

with an animal disease has one great advantage, for there can be extensive use of experimental methods unthinkable with human beings. To Czech farmers losing pigs, this may be little consolation. But it may save the lives of many little children.

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WILDLIFE

Menhaden Is America's Most-Caught Fish

► EVER hear of menhaden? It's America's most-caught fish, even though you've probably never eaten it.

No less than 950,000,000 pounds of menhaden were landed last year, tops for one species, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported.

Salmon and Pacific pilchards (sardines, to you) were next in total catches. But more menhaden was landed than the total for these two. Menhaden is not a food fish because of its rich oil. This oil has many uses which make the fish valuable. After the oil is extracted, the waste is used for fertilizer or feed.

The commercial catch of 4,500,000,000 pounds of all species last year was no record, the Service said. Thanks to inflation, though, commercial fishermen got more money than ever before.

San Pedro, Calif., is the nation's top fishing port, followed by Gloucester, Mass. Boston and San Diego are tied for third in the 1948 figures.

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NEW SYNCHROTRON—This circular mass of steel and wire is Cornell University's new 300,000,000-electron-volt synchrotron. The 85-ton apparatus is shown being tested.