

VETERINARY MEDICINE

Aftosa Lab Killed

Congress, beset by the faint-hearted, refused money to set up a laboratory off the Rhode Island coast for the study of aftosa after previously authorizing the project.

► THE ABSENCE of one small item in the \$17,000,000 supplemental appropriations bill must have struck fear into the heart of the Devil, despite his gloatings over H-bombs, bigger bazookas and more battalions.

By legend, the Devil has cloven hoofs. And when Congress killed an Agriculture Department project to build an animal disease laboratory off the Rhode Island coast, all cloven-hoofed animals—cattle, sheep, swine and goats as well as Lucifer—moved deeper into the shadow of one of the most dangerous plagues in the world, foot-and-mouth disease.

On Prudence Island, in Narragansett Bay, was to be built the largest laboratory in the world devoted to study of foot-and-mouth disease. Congress approved the need for such a laboratory somewhere in the United States in 1948. Last year \$500,000 was appropriated to pick a site, secure options on the land and prepare plans for the research center. Prudence Island was then chosen as the best possible location in the country.

But Congress now has refused the money to build the laboratory. It met the frightening opposition of such organizations as the Cape Cod Milk Goat Breeders Association, the Newport, R. I., County Chamber of Commerce and the Rhode Island Federation of Garden Clubs.

With great indignation, these groups joined dairymen, cattle breeders and resort owners in the area in protesting that the proposed laboratory was a menace to public health, the New England farmer, the summer resort tourist trade and the safety of the milk and meat supplies of the nation.

The organism that causes foot-and-mouth disease is a filterable virus. It is so small it can be seen only under an electron microscope. Highly contagious, it can race like wildfire through a cattle herd. Cattle men fear it above all other diseases, for there is no cure. Infected animals must be killed and buried under lime. If the disease once gained a foothold in the United States, it would almost certainly disrupt the nation's livestock industry and meat supply.

For nearly four years, scientists of this country and Mexico have been waging a desperate battle to stamp out foot-and-mouth disease below the Rio Grande. The border has been closed to all cattle shipments since 1947, and Uncle Sam has spent \$119,000,000 and sent 900 Americans to help fight "aftosa," as Mexicans call foot-and-mouth.

In a laboratory outside of Mexico City, the scientists achieved what was believed to be impossible—eradication of the disease,

not by mass destruction but by vaccination. A new serum, administered four times to every animal in a 205,000-square-mile quarantine belt, stopped the disease from spreading. Since last December, there has not been a new case.

It will take two more years to learn whether the new technique really has worked, or whether the virus is merely dormant until the immunization of the cattle wears off. Meantime, production of the vaccine has ceased. Only a rigid in-

spection system is now being carried on.

In this country, no research on foot-and-mouth disease is permitted. Congress passed a law that the virulent virus could be studied only on an island separated from the mainland by deep navigable waters. The Agriculture Department now has no such laboratory—nor will it have, this year at least.

In its request for funds—to carry out Congressional directions—Agriculture hoped at last to obtain a laboratory where new knowledge and new vaccines might someday wipe out even the threat of foot-and-mouth disease.

But then came the bellows from Rhode Island—"We approve highly of a laboratory, but we don't want it here," said witness after witness.

Congress meekly concurred, and the United States, this year at least, will not have a single place where scientists are allowed to study the dread plague of animals with cloven hoofs.

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MEDICINE

New Dressings for Burns

► NEW dressings almost as big as a blanket are on their way to Korea for better treatment of large-sized wounds and burns our fighting men may suffer.

The smaller of the two new dressings is about five times larger than the largest size single dressing now in use. It measures 19 by 34 inches. The larger one measures 43 by 45 inches.

The dressings are made of a layer of highly absorbent fine mesh gauze, a layer

of absorbent cotton, a layer of non-absorbent cellulose and an outer layer of paper. The gauze layer that goes next to the wound may be treated to reduce irritation to wounds. The non-absorbent layer prevents bacteria from entering the wound. Both gauze and paper are buff color.

One advantage of the new dressings is that they can be left on for as long as two weeks, instead of having to be changed every day or two as at present. Another is



BLANKET DRESSINGS—The bigger dressing for burns is easily applied, as shown in the picture, and can be left on as long as two weeks.