

MEDICINE

DDT Not Sickness Cause

No need to worry about getting dangerous disease from insecticide residue on food, National Research Council committee reports.

➤ YOU DO NOT need to worry about getting some dangerous or strange sickness from DDT, parathion or other insecticide that might be in your food because the farmer used it to protect his crops.

And you can rest easy about chemicals used to retard mold on bread, improve the quality of evaporated milk and keep butter a summer-yellow color all year round.

The Food Protection Committee of the National Research Council has just issued a statement to this effect. The committee has worked for a year on this subject of "chemical additives" and their effect on health.

"There is no evidence that consumption of foods resulting from the use of new chemicals in crop production or in the processing of foods has created mysterious diseases and epidemics or endangered the health of the people," the National Research Council declares.

This should kill the rumors about virus X disease epidemics coming from DDT and

other, similar rumors, all of which presumably started because people drew conclusions without sufficient information. Such rumors have been widespread in recent years.

Parathion, for example, is an extremely poisonous substance. But it is extremely volatile in the form used to control codling moth on fruit trees. It therefore blows away very quickly. If the farmer follows directions not to use it later than one month before harvest, none of the poisonous material will be left on the fruit that reaches the consumer.

As to the idea that we are eating poison with our bread because chemicals to keep it fresh are added, the Council says this:

"Contrary to some ideas that have been circulated, reliable food processors have not reduced the nutritional quality of our foods nor created inferior products through the use of chemical additives. Actually, the quality and sanitary characteristics of our foods have been improving."

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Fighting A-Bomb Fires

➤ A NEW manual for the training of auxiliary and regular firemen in the fighting of fires set by A-bombs and incendiaries will appear shortly after the first of the year.

Published by the Federal Civil Defense Administration, it will take into account the danger from the powerful "fire storms" which were experienced by Hiroshima and Hamburg during World War II.

Already fire wardens from cities throughout the nation are being trained in fire fighting at a special school at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College. Another such school will open near Philadelphia in January.

Meantime, Federal civil defense officials are preparing suggestions to cities on how to make themselves less vulnerable to fire caused by A-bombs. Under the law these, of course, will be only suggestions.

They will include such matters as the preparing of fire brakes and erection of fire walls, the use of fire-resistant paint, the proper spacing of new construction. Information on the kinds of construction which will best resist fire will be included.

This is not one minute too soon, according to Horatio Bond, chief engineer of the National Fire Protection Association. In

1946, we knew most of what we need to know to make our cities more fire resistant. Military men, he said, could have begun advising municipalities on new construction at that time.

It takes congestion, he pointed out, to produce the fire storms which swept through Hiroshima and Hamburg. Sensible planning of new construction and tearing down of older buildings might allay this danger.

Science News Letter, December 22, 1951

MEDICINE

Vitamins Seen as Future Heart Disease Prescription

➤ DOCTORS IN the future may be prescribing vitamins for treatment of heart disease, it appears from research reported by Dr. Frederick J. Stare of Harvard School of Public Health at a meeting of the Institute of Life Insurance in New York.

Working with duck hearts, he finds that the ability of heart tissue to utilize foodstuffs efficiently is damaged by a great variety of vitamin deficiencies. Heretofore doctors have thought the chief vitamin lack that affected the heart was lack of thiamine,

or vitamin B 1. This lack results in what is called beri-beri heart disease.

Now Dr. Stare finds that hearts cannot utilize foodstuffs efficiently when the diet is lacking in any of the following vitamins: niacin, folic acid, pantothenic acid, biotin and pyridoxine.

"The facts these researches yield," he said, "may eventually result in improved therapy (treatment) for certain types of heart disease."

Science News Letter, December 22, 1951

BIOCHEMISTRY

Synthesize New Vitamin Factor Called Biocytin

➤ A NEW vitamin factor, called biocytin, has now been made artificially.

It was first isolated in pure crystalline form in 1949 by cooperative research between scientists at Sharp and Dohme, Philadelphia, and Merck and Co., Rahway, N. J. These same scientists announce they have now synthesized the vitamin factor.

Biocytin occurs only in infinitesimal amounts and the scientists have no idea what its value may be. Its isolation and synthesis are considered "heroic" achievements because of the very small amounts the scientists had to work with.

Some 25 tons of yeast were processed to obtain less than a thirtieth of an ounce of biocytin. The new vitamin factor is related to biotin.

Scientists announcing the synthesis in the journal *SCIENCE* (Dec. 14) are: Drs. Lemuel D. Wright and Emlen L. Cresson and Mrs. Helen R. Skeggs of Sharp and Dohme, and Drs. Robert L. Peck, Donald E. Wolf, Thomas R. Wood, John Valiant and Karl Folkers of Merck and Co.

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MEDICINE

War Gas Ointment Treats Metal-Caused Inflammation

➤ CHRONIC SKIN inflammations due to contact with heavy metals such as chromium compounds might be helped by use of an ointment containing BAL, the lewisite war gas antidote.

Good results with this ointment in six out of seven patients with chrome dermatitis were reported by Dr. Harold N. Cole, Jr., of Western Reserve University, Cleveland, at the meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology and Syphilology in Chicago.

Injections of BAL into the muscles proved of no value. But the three per cent BAL ointment helped in both severe and mild cases in the course of two weeks to four months. The one patient who was not helped could not tolerate the first application of the ointment and the treatment could not be continued.

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