

# Danger in 'Swimming Hole'

➤ AS WARM WEATHER approaches, the old swimming hole will again beckon to boys and girls in farm areas. But disease germs lurk in waters exposed to cattle and other animals, and such waters should not be used for recreation.

One "swimming hole disease" called leptospirosis is caused by water-borne *Leptospira pomona*. The first major U.S. outbreak of this acutely infectious disease in man was reported in 1951.

Two recent outbreaks in Iowa are reported in Public Health Reports, 81:299, 1966, by Drs. Stanley L. Diesch and William F. McCulloch of the Institute of Agricultural Medicine, University of Iowa College of Medicine, Iowa City.

Infected persons had gone swimming in water frequented by cattle, swine and wild animals such as raccoons, opossums, foxes, muskrats and mice. Water tests revealed the first documented isolation of pathogenic leptospires from natural waters in Iowa.

The isolation of pathogenic leptospires from water from which humans were infected is significant in both the United States and other areas of the world, the researchers pointed out. Domestic animals and wildlife in-

fectured with leptospires are potential carriers and shedders of leptospires in the urine.

Warm summer temperatures are ideal for maintaining leptospiral organisms in water, and heavy rains may transport the organisms downstream. When the temperature becomes high and there is no rain, water becomes stagnant and conditions are suitable for maintaining the organisms.

Farm ponds in the United States accounted for two million surface acres of water in 1960. An increase of one-half million acres by 1976 and another million acres by the year 2000 have been predicted. In states where natural lakes are few, farm ponds, rivers and streams are widely used for recreational purposes. In 1964, there were approximately 26,470 farm ponds in Iowa.

Other states have similar hazards. The Iowa researchers said that many privately operated recreational facilities are being established near populated centers and that preventive measures are needed to protect man against exposure to the agents of infectious disease that may be present in recreational waters.

• Science News, 89:362 May 14, 1966

## Questions

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