

RESOURCES

No Shortage of Wool

► IF YOU have been considering buying a couple of woolen coats to hoard this winter, don't. Civilians won't feel the pinch of any wool shortage this year, according to spokesmen for the WPB.

Consumers may have been alarmed by a report that the Army has decided to buy up the bulk of the domestic wool clip now available. Some news reports omitted the statement that "the supply of fabrics for civilian apparel has been taken care of through arrangements for purchase of imported wool and domestic wool not required by the armed services, and through WPB's program for the blending of wool with rayon, cotton and other light fibers."

In checking with WPB spokesmen, it was found that the civilian wool allowance is generous indeed; in fact, the government seems to be anxious that none of us should go cold this winter. In spite of all those uniforms and blankets for the armed services, there will be plenty of wool to go around, partly because last year set an all-time record for production of all-wool fabrics.

However, we may have to get over our rather snobbish insistence on "virgin" wool. Oddly enough—or is it odd?—men have been more particular than women on this point. Used or re-processed wool is not necessarily any better or any worse than the fancy-sounding "virgin" or "pure" wool. It all depends on the quality. A high grade of used wool is of course better than an inferior quality of new wool. Re-processed wool is sometimes used to increase durability, but usually to decrease cost.

But the word "used" applied to clothing makes us all shudder slightly, a tendency which is not diminished by

the manufacturers' habit of calling used wool "shoddy." We forget that used wool is just as "clean" as virgin wool, since it has to be carefully scoured before it is garneted (reduced to its fibrous state).

A great deal of our woolen clothing has always been composed of used and re-processed fibers, although we were not all aware of it until the new labelling laws went into effect last July, enforced by the Federal Trade Commission.

Our winter garments are now either labelled "Wool" (meaning "new," "virgin," or "pure" wool) or the label must give the percentage of any other fiber used, including used or re-processed wool, cotton, rayon or other synthetic fiber. Re-processed wool is that which has been woven or felted previously into a wool product but was never used by "the ultimate consumer." Used wool comes from garments which may have been worn but which have been chemically—and antiseptically—reduced to their naked fibers.

Wool fiber, by the way, is mainly composed of a proteid substance called keratin, which is 50% carbon and the remainder an airy mixture of nitrogen, hydrogen, sulfur and oxygen. So it is not too surprising that "camel's hair" coats have been made of coal, air and water in the form known as nylon.

"Research" is now producing fibers from peanuts, corn, fish, yucca, glass, and the bark of redwood trees, according to textile experts in the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Science News Letter, August 29, 1942

Most members of the *potato family*, which has 1,700 species, are poisonous.

● RADIO

Saturday, September 5, 1:30 p.m., EWT
"Adventures in Science," with Watson Davis, director of Science Service, over Columbia Broadcasting System.

Dr. Albert L. Elder, member of the Chemical Branch of the War Production Board, will speak as a professor of chemistry on leave from Syracuse University, discussing "Plastics: Their Use in the War and the Peace to Come."

Tuesday, September 1, 7:30 p.m., EWT

Science Clubs of America programs over WRUL, Boston, on 6.04, 9.70 and 11.73 megacycles.

One in a series of regular periods over this short wave station to serve science clubs, particularly in the high schools, throughout the Americas. Have your science group listen in at this time.

RESOURCES

Surgeons Patch Gloves, Conserve Drugs, AMA Asks

► SURGEONS are asked to patch their rubber gloves instead of throwing them away, to re-sterilize rubber drains, conserve adhesive plaster.

Physicians and hospitals must practice severe economy in using chemicals, drugs, metals, and other needed war supplies, the Committee on Drugs and Medical Supplies of the American Medical Association warns.

This program, endorsed by the Health Supplies Branch of the War Production Board, states further that "unnecessarily large dressings should be avoided. Catgut must be conserved. Alcohol and other chemicals should be used as sparingly as possible."

"It is expected that hospital supplies will be available in sufficient amount to meet the needs of civilian patients," the medical committee states, "but only if those needs are reduced to a minimum. Enormous quantities must be supplied to the military hospitals and to our allies. Waste, however slight, must be scrupulously avoided."

Science News Letter, August 29, 1942

ZOOLOGY

Bats Caught in Road Oil; Recalls Ice Age Tragedy

► BATS CAUGHT on a freshly oiled road like flies on sticky flypaper, repeating in miniature the giant tragedies of the Ice Age when sabertooth tigers were trapped in the La Brea tar pits in Los Angeles, were reported to the Tennessee Academy of Science by E. J. Koestner of Piper City, Ill. The glistening surface of the oil looked like water, and thirst may have been the animals' undoing. After several washings in gasoline, to get the oil out of the fur, the bats made perfectly satisfactory museum specimens.

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