

ENTOMOLOGY

Insect Fifth Column

➤ **WARFARE AGAINST** insect pests, which cause \$4,000,000,000 worth of damage to crops and livestock in the United States each year, hit new strides in 1952, said the U. S. Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine in its annual report.

Greater use of an insect "fifth column" is leading to better control over insect and plant pests, the bureau said. Insect predators, imported for the job from Australia, have cleared more than 100,000 acres of land in California of Klamath weed, a plant that crowds out desirable forage grass.

To control insect pests before they have a chance to strike United States crops, the bureau has established insect parasites of the citrus blackfly in Mexico. The blackfly has caused great damage to Mexican citrus, the bureau said, and the importation of the parasite from India promises to help control the pest before it can infest orchards in the United States.

A similar attempt to halt insect pests before they can become introduced into the

United States is an inspection service, supervised by the entomology bureau, operating in Holland to examine flower bulbs there before they are imported into this country.

The Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine has continued experiments with insecticides and their effects on soil, crops and livestock. Studies on "systemic insecticides," insect poisons taken into the sap of a plant to kill the insect that bites it, show much progress, the bureau said.

The quarantine division of the bureau intercepted 56,000 lots of unauthorized airborne plants and plant products during the year. Much of the material carried insect pests and plant diseases, including notoriously destructive forms such as the oriental fruit fly, the citrus blackfly and the pink bollworm, the bureau said.

Besides the interceptions of airborne pests, more than 109,000 lots of restricted or prohibited plant material were stopped at ports of entry into the United States during the year.

Science News Letter, February 28, 1953

MEDICINE

Skin Disorder Relieved

➤ **A YOUNG** man who suffered an itchy, scaling skin disorder for 19 of his 29 years has gotten more relief through an ointment of hydrocortisone acetate than from any other medicine put on his inflamed skin, and is in better condition than at any time since the skin condition started.

He is one of 20 patients who got "eminently satisfactory results" from this ointment containing a relative of the famous arthritis remedy, cortisone.

Results of this treatment in 62 patients with various skin disorders are reported by Drs. Marion B. Sulzberger and Victor H. Witten of New York and Dr. C. Conrad Smith of Augusta, Ga., in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Feb. 7).

Of the 62 patients, 30 had the same skin condition, called atopic dermatitis, as the

young man. Seven were not helped and three improved but the doctors are not sure whether the improvement was due to the hydrocortisone acetate. The young man's case is considered noteworthy not only because of the results but because he had not improved when getting large doses of cortisone by mouth every day.

The ointment was of no value, the doctors found, in psoriasis, chronic discoid lupus erythematosus, pemphigus vulgaris and alopecia areata.

In cases which were helped, the good effects came within 48 hours to one week after starting treatment. When use of the ointment was stopped, the effects usually wore off after four to five days. There were no signs of any adverse effects and only small amounts of the drug are needed.

The ointment does not stain skin or clothing, does not generally sting or burn and does not have a disagreeable odor.

The doctors call this hydrocortisone, or Compound F, ointment an adjunct or aid in treatment of skin disorders but do not call it a cure. It is available only on doctor's prescription. Further studies to determine how it works are planned.

Science News Letter, February 28, 1953

The checkerberry is one of America's smallest native shrubs.

Licorice and its by-products are widely used in breakfast cereal, to mellow smoking pipes, to pickle sheet metal and as a foaming agent in beer.



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Questions

ARCHAEOLOGY—For how many years have scientists been searching for remains of Folsom Man? p. 133.

ASTRONOMY—Which planet comes closest to the earth? p. 138.

CHEMISTRY—How could sunshine help make Los Angeles' smog? p. 139.

DENTISTRY—Why is a toothbrush a good buy for baby's layette? p. 137.

GENERAL SCIENCE—How many Russian scientific journals can now be purchased in the U. S.? p. 133.

What number of A-bombs does the Federal Civil Defense Agency "assume" Russia has? p. 141.

NUTRITION—Into how many classes is beef graded? p. 134.

PUBLIC HEALTH—What is the danger of smuggling parrots and their relatives into the U. S.? p. 135.

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