

## ENTOMOLOGY

# Insect Fight Continues

Department of Agriculture pares budget by cutting out certain pest control programs where government efforts have reached point of diminishing returns. States will handle.

► IN SEARCH of savings, Secretary of Agriculture Benson ordered the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine to find about a 10% cut in its pest control program.

The bureau responded by paring off \$676,900 from Japanese beetle, sweet potato weevil and a pair of peach virus disease controls, which would virtually end Federal quarantine of these pests. But the bureau would not touch its previous appropriations requests for the remaining pest controls.

SCIENCE SERVICE asked Dr. Lee W. Popham, assistant chief of the bureau, why it decided to end some controls while asking for more money on other pest problems. Why was the budget cut not distributed among all the control projects? Have the Japanese beetle, sweet potato weevil and the peach viruses been conquered?

Federal work in pest control, Dr. Popham said, is generally aimed at preventing spread of the pests into uninfested parts of the country through quarantine and inspection. The bulk of pest eradication measures in a given area is carried on by state, local and private means, though often with Federal cooperation.

With the Japanese beetle, sweet potato weevil and the phony peach and peach mosaic diseases, Federal efforts have reached a point of diminishing returns. These pests have become well established in certain parts of the country and farmers and the state authorities have learned what must be done to "live with them."

As was the case of the cotton boll weevil, it has become the farmers' personal responsibility to fight these pests on his land. The states can effectively and cheaply handle the inspection and quarantine of these pests, Dr. Popham said.

Infested states have been warned for several years now that the time was approaching for them to take over this work. Secre-

tary Benson's order to cut the budget furnished the push that was required to put this plan into effect.

But with the other insect and plant disease pests under Federal control, the story is different. They have not become so widely established like the Japanese beetle, or subdued like the peach mosaic, that Federal control is still not absolutely indispensable.

It would be disastrous, for instance, to slacken efforts against the golden nematode, a highly destructive pest of Irish potatoes. This minute "worm" is completely confined to Long Island, New York. But if it managed to spread into the potato fields of Maine, Idaho and other large producing areas, it would create havoc. The budget calls for \$344,900 to keep the golden nematode in bounds; without this control, the potato industry would lose millions of dollars to the pest.

The Hall scale, a tiny sucking insect that attacks peaches and almonds especially, invaded this country in 1934. It has been confined to one small area near Chico, Calif., however, and is one of the few insect pests that may be totally eradicated from U. S. soil.

This is why the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine cannot let up against this insect. By spending \$117,200 a year now, the Hall scale may be destroyed, to save millions in later years.

Other insect and plant disease pests on the bureau's "must" list for control are: the citrus blackfly and Mexican fruit fly; barberry, host of the wheat stem rust fungus; pink bollworm; white-fringed beetle; gypsy and brown-tail moths; and grasshoppers and Mormon crickets.

A special contingency fund is always available for use against sudden outbreaks of new insect pests or plant diseases, or unexpected increases in old pest problems.

The total appropriations asked under the Eisenhower budget for pest control is \$4,923,100. The Truman budget called for \$5,600,000.

Science News Letter, May 2, 1953

Trash and brush should be burned in the evening, not in the morning; many fires started in the morning get out of control because the outdoor temperature rises, the humidity drops and the wind picks up.

Boxwoods can be kept in better condition with some of the new insecticides which are more effective than older materials in controlling pests of these ornamental shrubs.

## Questions

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### MEDICINE

## Breath Shortness, Sore Throat Smoker's Asthma

► A GOOD many people who are short of breath and wheeze asthmatically, and have frequent sore throat colds probably are suffering from smoker's asthma.

Dr. George L. Waldbott of Detroit reported on this newly discovered disease in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (April 18).

His own experience with the disease had led him to recognize it in more than 30 of his patients and to suspect its existence in many more of the population. A feeling of tightness in the throat and upper air passages and pain in the chest are other symptoms.

The remedy, amounting to cure in most cases: Stop smoking.

Science News Letter, May 2, 1953

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