

MEDICINE

Skin Disorders From Taking Alfalfa Seed

► TAKING ALFALFA seed in capsules or drinking a "tea" made from them will not cure arthritis, diabetes and other disorders, but it can cause skin trouble.

Dr. William H. Kaufman, Roanoke, Va., physician, reports in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (July 17) that many persons in southwest Virginia have been swallowing alfalfa seed with the mistaken idea that it is good for them.

He describes two of several cases of eruptions due to alfalfa, and advises doctors that further cases are likely to appear because it is believed that the practice of using alfalfa seed has become widespread throughout the United States.

Patients are often reluctant to admit taking alfalfa seed, however, and the physician has to make careful inquiries to discover the cause of such dermatitis.

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TECHNOLOGY

Vertical Conveyor Belt Installed for People

► A VERTICAL conveyor belt has been installed to speed attendants from floor to floor in a New York parking lot.

The continuous, 105-foot belt has steps placed 16 feet apart. When stopped, two steps are at each of the garage's four levels. The four steps on one side of the belt are ready to go down; the other four are waiting to go up.

A rider, standing on one of the steps, grasps a safety handle and starts the "Man-Lift" by pulling a rope beside the belt.

The rope starts a three-horsepower electric motor that turns a pulley at each end of the rubber and cotton belt.

The lift was designed by the J. B. Ehrsam & Sons Manufacturing Co.

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INVENTION

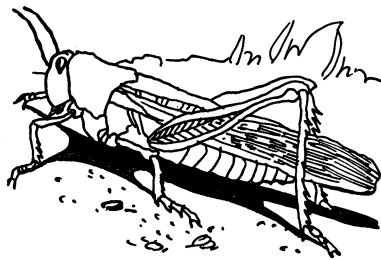
Take Temperature Of Molten Metal

► A METHOD has been worked out that permits foundrymen to take the accurate temperature of molten metal directly as it is tapped from the furnace. It eliminates complicated correction charts.

Molten metal runs through a trough to a special container where it swirls around, forming a vortex. A pyrometer can be sighted into the vortex for a true temperature reading. Sunlight, oxide films on the metal, or slag mixed into it do not affect the temperature reading.

The method was invented by Raymond C. Machler of Philadelphia and William G. Fastie of Willow Grove, Pa. They assigned patent No. 2,683,988 to Leeds and Northrup Company.

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Grasshoppers

► IN AESOP'S fable of the ant and the grasshopper, the ant is made out to be sober, conscientious, and hard-working, with a provident eye for the rigorous winter ahead. The grasshopper is painted as a frivolous idler who fiddles the summer away with no care for the morrow.

Actually Aesop was more of a moralist than a naturalist. As a tale-teller with an axe to grind, Aesop may also have harbored an unwitting prejudice against a creature endowed with a built-in musical instrument. For grasshoppers, although far from idle, do produce a rhythmic sound that is enchanting or irksome, depending on your point of view.

MEDICINE

Effects of Polio Vaccine

► A SUCCESSFUL vaccine against polio would have far-reaching effects. It not only would make the vaccinated persons resistant to the disease, it would change the susceptibility of the entire population as well.

This picture of what an effective vaccine against polio could do has been given by Dr. Thomas Francis Jr., chairman of the University of Michigan's department of epidemiology.

Epidemiology is the study of disease in the community, disease in the aggregate. Sometimes man is only an incidental participant in the formation of this aggregate, but sometimes, as with poliomyelitis, man himself is the instigator.

So far scientific evidence points to man as the host for the virus which would destroy the very community in which man finds he must live. One by one such contributions as flies, water supply, geography, while found to be accessory to the spread of the disease, cannot be held responsible for the disease itself.

"Contamination from the human alimentary tract is a major source of the disease," said Dr. Francis.

The seasonal character of polio remains

The male grasshopper can fiddle or keep silent at will. When it feels like sounding off, it rubs the inside of the hind legs against the wings, producing a rasping or crackling sound. It can do this one leg at a time or both together. The female is unable to fiddle.

Katydid and crickets, which are closely related to grasshoppers, are even more musical. They produce a louder tone and a more varied phrase. Their songs, with day and night variations, have been written down in musical notation. It might be an interesting experiment to go out into the fields with a violin and play the katydid song and see what kind of back-talk you provoked.

However, grasshoppers are neither all music nor all frivolity. Their business in life is to eat and to reproduce, and they allow their fiddling to interfere with neither. Grasshoppers are vegetarians, and sometimes when they become extremely numerous they move forward in great swarms, ruining crops and devastating the countryside.

If grasshoppers sometimes show a partiality for the same foods that man likes, man has frequently returned the compliment in a left-handed sort of way by feeding in turn on the grasshoppers themselves. In many parts of the world roasted grasshoppers are eaten as a food. The Japanese have found that they are even more nutritious than fish.

Some American Indians used to eat grasshoppers, and at least one American naturalist, who has broiled and eaten them out of scientific curiosity, said they taste like lobster.

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a mystery, even though it is reasonable to assume that man is the carrier. Polio appears to coincide with the season of typhoid fever and gastrointestinal diseases. It also coincides with period of greatest natural abundance. For example, polio seems to come with the growth of garden vegetables, fruits, flowers and insects.

It also appears to coincide with that period of the year when, winter behind and summer beckoning, people are more active. Increased human activity, kept especially virulent by the intimacy of family relationships, creates a greater opportunity for encountering human pollution in the community.

So many facts must be considered in the total epidemiological community that the best solution to a problem such as poliomyelitis is a vaccine. Such a vaccine should contain all three types of polio virus, its infectious power destroyed, but its antibody producing ability preserved.

"They are testing such a vaccine," said Dr. Francis, "and to me it is the most reasonable and safest approach to this community problem."

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