

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Larger Thyroid Glands May Mean More Eggs

► **BIGGER THYROID GLANDS** in poultry and cattle may result in greater production of eggs and meat.

Experiments on New Hampshire Red chickens at the Agricultural Research Center in Beltsville, Md., are expected to show whether fowl with extra-large thyroids can outgrow and outproduce their small-thyroid competitors.

If this proves to be true, thyroid size may become an important factor in breeding.

For experimental purposes two lines of New Hampshire Reds have been developed by poultry geneticists C. W. Knox and W. E. Shaklee of the center. In one line the average thyroid weight is 32.8 milligrams, almost double the 18.2 milligram average of the other strain.

The two groups of chickens will get identical rations and will be raised under the same environmental conditions, it is reported in *Agricultural Research* (March).

Science News Letter, March 24, 1956

BIOCHEMISTRY

Redheads' Difference Found in the Pink

► **REDHEADS** have something that apparently no one else has. It is trichosiderin.

Neither fatal nor responsible for the legendary anger of redheads, trichosiderin is a pink pigment found only in red hairs. It does not appear in non-red hairs, Dr. N. A. Barnicot of University College, London, reports in *Nature* (March 3).

In tests with "bright red hair," trichosiderin was extracted chemically. Twenty other shades of hair, including albino hair, failed to produce trichosiderin or a pink color, but did produce varying hues of yellow, the British scientists report.

Science News Letter, March 24, 1956

HOME ECONOMICS

Mildew May Make Kitchen Walls Gray

► **KITCHEN WALLS** with a "tattle-tale gray" look may not be dirty but mildewed.

Cooking often makes fumes that are loaded with nutrients on which mildew organisms and bacteria can feed. To prevent this, opening the windows or using fans to get cooking fumes, heat and odor out as fast as possible can be tried.

When mildewing has already occurred, the Hospital Bureau of Standards and Supplies in New York suggests the following treatment:

"Scrub with a good cleaning solution and spray with any effective disinfectant. These treatments must be repeated at intervals of two weeks to one month, depending upon conditions."

Science News Letter, March 24, 1956



RARE BASSARICYON—Now on view in Washington's National Zoological Park, the bassaricyon is the first to be displayed in any zoo anywhere in the world since the London Zoo's specimen died about 130 years ago. Native to South America, the bassaricyon resembles the kinkajou.

PSYCHOLOGY

Solitary Mind Active

► **ISOLATION** makes the mind turn inward. It does not drift into a state of half-sleeping or semi-consciousness.

Instead, the brain stays active and accumulates surplus energy to extreme degrees. A reintegration of the personality may result.

These are among the findings of preliminary studies of isolation reported by Dr. John C. Lilly of the National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Md., at a mid-Atlantic regional research conference of the American Psychiatric Association held at Georgetown University School of Medicine, Washington, D. C.

Dr. Lilly made his findings by having himself suspended in a tank of slowly flowing water. The temperature of the water was about 94 degrees, just below normal body temperature. He wore nothing but a blacked-out headmask for breathing.

The object of the experiment was to find out what happens to the normal healthy human mind when it is freed of all stimuli through sight, hearing and sense of touch, and from directing any outward activity such as talking or physical movement. In other words, the mind was as completely isolated as it could be made.

Possible applications to "brainwashing" and its opposite, psychiatric treatment of mental sickness, can be made from the findings, Dr. Lilly suggested.

For about the first three-quarters of an

hour, Dr. Lilly reported, he was aware of his surroundings. The mind is thinking about recent problems, what has been going on since arising that morning, and so on. The experiment is always started after a full night's rest.

Gradually he began to relax and "more or less enjoy the experience. The feeling of being isolated in space and having nothing to do is restful and relaxing at this stage."

Once, after two and a half hours in the tank, Dr. Lilly reached the state of visual imagery when he began to see things.

Forms appeared. They were small, strangely shaped objects with self-luminous borders. A tunnel whose inside "space" seemed to be emitting a blue light then appeared. At this point leakage of water into the mask stopped the experiment.

The results, Dr. Lilly pointed out, are similar to those reported by polar explorers who have lived alone or persons who have sailed alone in a boat for long periods.

From such studies psychiatrists may get what they have not yet had, "a full documented picture of the range available to the healthy human adult mind."

They may get a clearer, sharper picture of some of the causes of mental illness.

Still to be learned are the effects, in addition to isolation, of loss of sleep, starvation and other things which have "great power in changing healthy minds to sick ones."

Science News Letter, March 24, 1956