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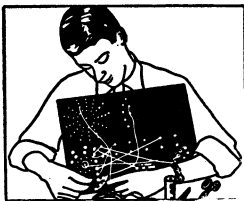
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PUBLIC HEALTH

Condemn Royal Jelly

The Federal Trade Commission and Food and Drug Administration are investigating the "unfounded claims" made by the manufacturers and distributors of royal jelly.

► THE U. S. Government is inquiring whether the advertising and sale of royal jelly, the queen bee food, is a "racket."

The Federal Trade Commission, charged with detecting and stopping fraudulent and misleading advertising, is actively conducting "a number of investigations" into what are termed "unfounded claims" of the royal jelly trade.

The Food and Drug Administration is also looking into the use of royal jelly in cosmetics, foods and drugs.

Government and private scientists say many quotations from scientific reports appearing in some royal jelly advertising have been used out of context, and that if the public could see the entire report it would often be obvious the scientists intended no support of the claims.

Fraudulent Ads

An official of the FTC has admitted the Commission is considering legal action as a result of "a multitude of inquiries or complaints, mostly complaints, from the public." So far, he said, the investigation reveals that advertisements claiming therapeutic, cosmetic or food value of royal jelly for humans are "fraudulent and a hoax."

The Food and Drug Administration already has seized, following court actions, several large quantities of drug preparations containing royal jelly. Most of the shipments have been confiscated after court default or no contest by the producers. However, two contested cases, in the Detroit and New York City areas, are expected to set a precedent for future actions.

Under existing law, the FDA can act only against drug preparations for which therapeutic claims have been made. Action against royal jelly as a cosmetic or food requires proof that the bee product is actually harmful to humans.

The FDA's official stand on royal jelly used to answer public inquiries is:

"Our medical advisers have reviewed carefully the available information on royal jelly and have not seen any convincing evidence that it has any value whatever when used by man either as a food, or as a drug, or as a cosmetic. Hence, we recommend no product that contains it."

The Post Office Department also has taken action against some royal jelly advertising, and is cooperating with the regulatory agencies in their current investigations.

Royal jelly, the supposedly mysterious substance that makes the difference between worker bees and queen bees, probably is a very good food. Good for bees, but not for humans.

That sums up the attitude of competent scientists, including physicians and beekeep-

ing authorities, who have studied royal jelly. They hasten to add that so far they have found nothing harmful to humans in royal jelly, but neither have they found anything beneficial.

James I. Hambleton, in charge of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's beekeeping section, Beltsville, Md., said the most significant fact commonly overlooked by the public is that the queen bee exists entirely on royal jelly. The milky-white nectar is the queen's food. Humans should not expect to gain food value from the tiny doses, 50 to 100 milligrams, many of them have been taking daily.

"Most of the claims made for royal jelly are unwarranted and not backed by clinical research," Mr. Hambleton said, adding that reputable scientists have been unable to find any trace of most of the "famous European scientists" quoted in many royal jelly advertisements.

Of the "European scientists" actually located, he said, some have been without the recognition of their professional colleagues, and others have carried reputations for conducting quick, sometimes one-day "research" programs for fees.

Many scientists feel the current royal jelly fad probably stems from misinterpretations and unwarranted assumptions drawn from early basic research into how a royal jelly diet can change an ordinary bee larva into a queen.

Queen Bee Food

In trying to find out why one egg hatches a worker bee and why another hatches a queen bee, scientists learned that when a queen dies the remaining bees select one of the better-looking newly-hatched grubs as their future queen. For the first two and one-half days after hatching, all grubs are fed royal jelly, a secretion of pharyngeal glands of workers. However, the young bees destined to be workers or drones are soon switched to a diet of pollen and nectar. The future queen is continued on royal jelly.

Even the queen fed on royal jelly is far from perfect. She has no maternal instinct. She will reproduce, but will not care for her young. She is larger than other bees, but not capable of performing their work because of only partly-developed pollen-gathering equipment on her legs.

Just because a queen fed only royal jelly outlives other bees and can reproduce whereas others cannot, there is no reason to believe that humans, fed very tiny amounts of royal jelly in their diets, will live longer or be more energetic, scientists point out. With respect to dietary needs, humans and bees cannot be compared.

Science News Letter, March 29, 1958