

BACTERIOLOGY

Humidity Affects Life Span of Bacteria

► THE HIGHER the humidity, the longer the life span of disease-producing bacteria.

Thus, humidity may be a determining factor in transmission of airborne diseases such as the common cold and other respiratory illnesses, two scientists report.

Disease-producing bacteria suspended in air seem to remain alive and probably infective for much longer periods of time when the humidity is high than when it is low.

Germs suspended in air, such as after coughing or sneezing, are killed by sunlight in direct proportion to the intensity of the light. This germicidal action of sunlight, however, is definitely limited by the amount of moisture in the air, Dr. James M. Beebe and Mrs. Gerda W. Pirsch of the Army Chemical Corps Biological Warfare Laboratories, Fort Detrick, Frederick, Md., report in the *Journal of Applied Microbiology*.

At high relative humidities, the germ-killing power of sunlight was found to be low, or lacking entirely. Moisture appeared to form a barrier which absorbed the sun's germicidal rays.

Even though the sun appears bright, the scientists note, its germicidal effectiveness can be quite limited on humid days. This might explain the belief that the sunny, dry Southwest is a more healthful climate than some of the humid areas of the United States, they say.

Science News Letter, June 28, 1958

Questions

ASTRONOMY—How fast is the center of the Milky Way expanding? p. 403.

GEOPHYSICS—Where will American scientists go to observe the solar eclipse of October 12? p. 409.

NUTRITION—What effect has diet had on myopia in children? p. 410.

PHYSICS—What is the important distance factor in playing golf? p. 405.

Photographs: Cover, British Information Services; p. 403, R. G. LeTourneau, Inc.; p. 405, Atomics International; p. 406, Committee of Stainless Steel Producers; p. 412, Eastman Chemical Products, Inc.

Do You Know?

Dimethoate, a new experimental *parasiticide*, has demonstrated marked efficiency in controlling nasal botflies that attack sheep.

A widely accepted theory explains that *appetite* signals are turned on and off by fluctuating levels of glucose in the blood.

A high degree of thyroid activity increases, and a low degree decreases, resistance to *tuberculosis*.

Some 50 species of the *Anopheles* mosquito are known to transmit *malaria*; however, only female mosquitoes carry the malaria parasite from man to man.

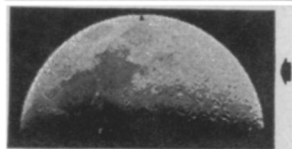
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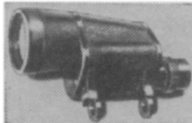
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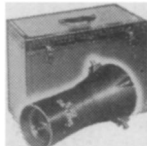
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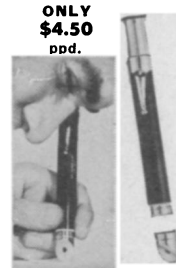
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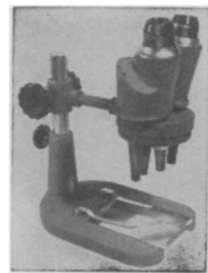
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