



**Not Necessarily a Nuisance**

**P**ORCUPINES are not necessarily the unalloyed nuisances in the forests which many foresters consider them, Prof. James D. Curtis, of the University of Maine, suggests. Their bark-chewings are not always harmful, and in many instances may even be beneficial, he points out (*Jour. Forestry*, July).

During the growing season porcupines feed largely on green herbage at ground level, so that except in winter they do neither good nor evil so far as trees are concerned. But in the snowy months they do much of their feeding in the tree-tops, where they chew the bark from smaller branches. Considering how heavy-bodied and apparently clumsy they are, porcupines are astonishingly good climbers. Prof. Curtis states that he has found evidences of their gnawings as much as 70 feet above the ground.

Porcupine feeding injury to trees takes three principal forms. They chew patches of bark off branches and trunks, exposing the wood to the attack of rot-causing fungi. They gnaw smaller branches completely off. Finally, they sometimes gir-

dle the upper part of the trunk completely, in which case of course the whole tree above that point dies.

Prof. Curtis questions whether cutting off branches is necessarily injurious. It may be a form of harmless or even beneficial pruning. Also, it sometimes has the incidental value of dropping leafy boughs of hemlock for deer to browse on, in seasons when such provender is hard to find at ground level.

Furthermore, Prof. Curtis contends, even when trees are seriously injured or even killed as a result of porcupine feeding, the value of the injured tree should be considered. Many of the trees thus eliminated would have to go anyway, in the ordinary process of thinning

to make better stands of timber. Many others are of species held in low esteem from the viewpoint of commercial forestry. And a considerable part of Porky's feeding is done on shrubs which have no economic significance, or (like stag-horn sumac) are "weeds" that hinder the establishment of valuable trees.

Before turning in a final verdict, either against or for porcupines, Prof. Curtis urges, foresters should conduct thorough and unprejudiced researches on what the porcupines in their particular regions actually do to the trees. To shoot all porcupines at sight, just because one sees de-barked branches on some trees, seems a bit unscientific, to say the least.

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MEDICINE

# Bronchial Cancer Patients Saved by Early Diagnosis

## Far Too Many Now Allowed to Die Without Effective Treatment Although Diagnosis Is Possible Early

**F**AR too many patients with bronchial cancer are now denied the benefit of effective treatment and allowed to die "because no steps are taken even to arrive at a diagnosis until the condition is hopeless."

This charge of laxity or ignorance on the part of both the laity and the medical profession was made by Prof. Evarts Graham, of Washington University, St. Louis, at the University of Chicago Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration. Prof. Graham was among the 35 scientists and scholars to receive honorary degrees at the close of the celebration on Sept. 29.

Bronchial cancer constitutes about 10% of all cancers, Prof. Graham declared. Among patients coming to Barnes Hospital in St. Louis, 88% were in such an advanced stage of the disease that

they could not safely be operated on.

"Yet in 75 or 80% of cases a bronchoscopic examination and biopsy will establish the diagnosis even in early cases," he declared.

The only treatment known to be effective for this condition is complete surgical removal of the cancer, which usually means complete removal of the lung. One patient is now living and well in his ninth year after operation and many more are still living free from recurrence for shorter periods. At present about 35% of the patients die from the effects of the operation, but this figure can be greatly reduced, Prof. Graham

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