

MEDICINE

Venom Against Fungus

Fire ant, growing problem, produces a venom that inhibits 15 out of 21 fungus organisms and can repress some bacterial infections.

► FIFTEEN of 21 fungus organisms, most of which infect humans, were held in check by fire ant venom, a study has revealed.

The fire ant is a growing problem in the southeastern United States. Its bite is extremely painful and can cause allergic shock reactions, but previous studies have shown that its venom could repress some bacterial infections. The venom also inhibits the growth of fungus infections, Drs. James T. Sinski, George A. Adrouny, Vincent J. Derbes and Rodney C. Jung of Tulane University School of Medicine, New Orleans, have found. The anti-fungal action was shown by a lack of growth immediately surrounding a crystal of the venomous material placed in direct contact with the fungus being tested.

Among other investigations reported in the Public Health Service's publication "Highlights of Research Progress in Allergy and Infectious Diseases, 1960," is one that discounts the treatment value of artificially ionized air for patients with asthma. Dr. Bernard Zylberberg of the National Jewish Hospital, Denver, collaborated with Dr. M. H. Loveless of Cornell University in conducting experiments on the value of ionization for asthmatics.

A study of virus infections in Harlem apartment house mice was reported by

Drs. Wallace P. Rowe, Robert J. Huebner and Janet W. Hartley, all of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Bethesda, Md. The mouse study sought to determine whether the polyoma virus that produces multiple tumors in laboratory mice is found also in mice associated with the ordinary human environment.

Although mouse polyoma virus does not

ENTOMOLOGY

Ants Follow Military Rules

► THE ARMY ANTS that cut a destructive swath through Central American jungles devouring just about any insect in their way go strictly by the military books during these raids.

Dr. T. C. Schneirla of the American Museum of Natural History, New York, has found that these insects have a two-pronged attack consisting of daily raids with new bivouacs each night, followed by a phase of small raids from one camp, to which they return each night. The first lasts from 12 days to two weeks, the second approximately three weeks.

cause human disease, its study is of considerable importance in research on the possible virus cause of certain forms of human cancer. The investigators, who were assisted in their research by the New York City Health and Sanitation Department, found that certain blocks and certain apartment houses in the same block showed marked differences in the frequency of infection.

Dr. Karl Habel, chief of the Institute's Laboratory of Biology of Viruses, and his associates reported a somewhat related investigation in the PHS publication. In a study of the factors responsible for the tumor-producing properties of polyoma viruses, they found that once the tumor has been started, it may be unnecessary to maintain the virus to continue growth of the tumor.

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During the first attack, a wave of thousands of these ants advances through the dense jungle in columns as wide as 60 feet. Towards dusk, the column stops and "bunks" down for the night. The bivouac is formed by chains of ants linked from a log or vine to the ground. The ant "ropes" eventually merge, forming a wall enclosing a pocket of air, within which the queen rests.

The casualty rate for each swarm is very high. New broods frequently bolster the ranks, keeping the troops at approximately the same strength from month to month, or even year to year, Dr. Schneirla found during his studies of the army ant on Barro Colorado Island, tropical wildlife reserve in the Canal Zone of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington.

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GENERAL SCIENCE

Readers Give SNLs to Asian Students, Teachers

► STUDENTS and teachers in Asia have received with enthusiasm the gifts of copies of SCIENCE NEWS LETTER that have been sent to Magazines For Friendship in Los Angeles by readers who are willing to part with them for this purpose.

"There is such a tremendous interest in science and the SCIENCE NEWS LETTER covers the field in such an informative and interesting way," Mrs. Sophie Mayers of that organization declared. "One teacher wrote us that it was the best material he had ever seen and another that it was his only up-to-date science material."

Readers who wish to participate in this volunteer effort are invited to send a stamped self addressed envelope to Magazines, Box 3196, Los Angeles 28, Calif.

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In 1960-61 53,107 foreign students were enrolled in 1,666 U. S. colleges.



TARGET DOWNED—The Q-4B jet-powered target drone has been brought down safely by parachute, the landing shock mostly absorbed by automatically inflated impact bags. With a minimum of repairs, it will be ready to serve as a missile target again.