

Parrot Fever Not Transmitted By Birds Confined To Zoos

Public Health

YOU need not be afraid to visit the zoo for fear of getting parrot fever, or psittacosis. This strange and rare disease of birds and man has seldom been known to affect the parrots kept in zoos. Even if it did, you would be in no danger of contracting it from the bright-feathered creatures in their cages at the zoo or your favorite pet shop.

The only cases of this rare and highly fatal malady have been reported among pets in homes or shops. The only human cases have occurred as a result of intimate contact with infected birds.

Many people who keep parrots and other birds make a custom of feeding their pets from their own mouths. The histories of cases of psittacosis in human beings all show that the sick parrot had been handled and fondled by the persons who subsequently became ill. In a case reported in England, the bird's mistress, in order to keep her sick pet warm, allowed it to sleep under a woolen jacket against her breast.

However, no danger of infection seems to exist unless there is this direct contact. Consequently, Dr. William M. Mann, director of the National Zoological Park in Washington, said it has not been considered necessary to close the parrot room to visitors, even though several cases of psittacosis have been reported in nearby Annapolis. Dr. Mann added that the disease had never occurred among the parrots of this zoo, where it would surely have been detected, as post-mortem examinations are made of all the birds that die there.

For some fifteen years psittacosis has been unknown in Philadelphia zoological gardens, according to Dr. Herbert Fox of Philadelphia, leading authority on bird diseases. Scientists are not agreed as to the exact germ causing the disease. There seems to be considerable evidence that it is the *Bacillus psittacosis*. Some authori-

ties think the unsanitary conditions under which birds are kept on the journey up from the tropics may have some relation to the development of the disease.

So far it has not been a serious enough menace to warrant placing quarantine restrictions upon parrots. There is a considerable profit in the sale of these birds.

There were 68,000 parrots brought into the country during the last year.

When human beings contract psittacosis, they have the symptoms of pneumonia and also of typhoid fever. They suffer from extreme weakness, high fever, a cough, nausea and intestinal disturbances. The disease is fatal in 35 to 40 per cent. of the cases. Some authorities think that the patients actually have pneumonia, that the parrot fever has simply weakened their resistance and made them more susceptible to pneumonia. The disease in the parrots is confined to the digestive system, but in man it is localized in the lungs.

An English authority, Dr. A. P. Thompson of Birmingham, thinks the disease is perhaps not so very rare, but that a number of cases of it may occur which are considered to be some form of pneumonia or typhoid fever, particularly if the fact of a sick parrot in the household is not known to the physician. This was almost true of one case which Dr. Thompson attended. He was kept from a mistaken diagnosis in this case by the insistence of the patient's niece that her aunt had what the parrot had had.

The first case of psittacosis was reported from Germany in 1879. An epidemic of the disease occurred in Paris in 1892, at which time parrots had been very fashionable pets. Since then cases have occurred at intervals particularly in Italy, France and Germany, with only a few in England and the United States. During the last year, reports of cases have been more frequent in Europe and South America. An outbreak is now reported from Germany.

So little is known of the disease that public health authorities are unable to tell whether the three cases in Annapolis are the forerunner of a more wide-spread outbreak or whether they are simply an isolated occurrence. Infection from man to man is not known to occur, so there is little likelihood of anyone getting the disease who has not been in direct contact with a sick bird. However, excreta and even feathers have been found to carry the germ, so that contact with the cage as well as the bird is dangerous, if the parrot is suffering from psittacosis.

The present outbreak of psittacosis or parrot fever in this country has, so far as known, no connection with the one reported in Buenos Aires, Argentina, last fall, Dr. T. S. Palmer of the U. S. Bureau of Biological Survey, has discovered.

No commercial shipments of parrots have been imported from the Argentine since last July, so there is no likelihood that the outbreak here has any connection with that in which a number of actors in Buenos Aires died of the disease contracted from a parrot kept by the star of the troupe.

Some of the parrots that have caused the present outbreak in this country were probably imported from Cartagena, Colombia. They probably are one of the species commonly known as Amazon parrots. The Cuban species of parrot seems also to be involved in the out- (Turn to page 46)

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Crime Wave Spreads to Wild Animals

Zoology

The much-talked-of crime wave seems to have spread even to some of the wild animals of Yosemite National Park, and it has been necessary to provide a patrol wagon especially adapted to the peculiar need to take care of recalcitrant bears.

The patrol wagon is unique, consisting of a piece of corrugated pipe large enough to contain a bear, sealed at one end and equipped with a trap door at the other. It is mounted on pneumatic wheels to make the riding

Adults Need Vitamin D

Physiology

That the present-day craving for sun-tan safeguards health as well as social standing has been further demonstrated by two Chicago scientists, Dr. Katharine Blunt and Miss Ruth Cowan, who are about to publish a book on the subject of ultraviolet light and vitamin D.

If adults are deprived seriously of these two factors, they run the risk of osteomalacia, a famine disease in which the bones lose calcium, soften, and change in shape. Bow legs, carious teeth and peculiar gait develop in these people. If they played golf, swam outdoors, or even walked to work the condition could be averted. But in these days of scientific wonders other methods of prevention and cure have been discovered, such as ultraviolet light therapy, cod-liver oil, and irradiated foods. It is this light which is so important, and a person can either irradiate himself or purchase irradiated food.

In certain sections of India, among the women of the better class, osteomalacia is common because they are kept indoors most of the time and are heavily veiled when they do go out. The ultraviolet light never reaches them. Women of the lower class who are out all day in the open air are entirely free from the disease.

Ultraviolet light is the key to the situation in the prevention or relief of this condition among adults, but it cannot accomplish prevention or relief entirely by itself, because other factors enter in. While vitamin D is important, a supply of calcium is also necessary for bones to grow properly and to remain strong and healthy throughout life. Sunshine and cod-liver oil are good sources of vitamin D and calcium is to be found in milk, primarily, and also in fresh fruits and vegetables.

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easy and attached to an automobile truck.

When word is received at headquarters that a bear is disturbing the peace anywhere in the park, the patrol is quickly sent to the scene of trouble. Since bears live solitary lives, each holding sway over certain areas, the disturber is likely to be the only bear in his particular neighborhood. The pipe bear trap on wheels is then detached and a piece of meat placed inside.

This guilty bear, smelling the meat, usually crowds into the pipe in search of it. The trap door slams shut and the bruin is a prisoner.

Bears so caught in the inhabited portion of Yosemite Valley are sentenced to banishment. They are marked

Kennelly-Heaviside—Cont.

its supposed functions. I find, however, that the hypothesis of an electrically conducting stratum in the upper air was clearly enunciated in an article by Prof. A. E. Kennelly, of Harvard University, published in the *Electrical World and Engineer* of New York on March 15, 1902. The official date of Heaviside's disclosure of his hypothesis is December 19, 1902. About the same date H. Poincaré, A. Blondel, and C. E. Guillaume made similar hypotheses. If names are to be attached to this hypothetical layer it should be called, in equity, the "Kennelly-Heaviside" layer, a name which is beginning to be used in America.

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Parrot Fever—Cont'd

break. A special study of the parrot fever epidemic in this country is now being made by Dr. Charles Armstrong, of the U. S. Hygienic Laboratory in cooperation with the health officers of the various states and cities where cases have been reported.

Dr. Armstrong was detailed to this special work as a result of a meeting of the staff of the U. S. Public Health Service, called especially to consider the present situation in regard to psittacosis.

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One Cincinnati court has been equipped with a microphone and loudspeaker, so that jurors may be sure to catch all that is said by the witnesses.

with a daub of paint for purposes of later identification, taken to the lower end of the park and released. If they "repeat" they are identified by the paint mark.

Yellowstone Park's "holdup bears" have developed a new branch of the desperado business. One of them recently robbed the United States mails. Park Naturalist Dorr Yeager tells of the occurrence, which befell one of his colleagues, Dick White:

"It seems that some time ago Dick stopped at the West Thumb road camp for lunch. The season being closed, and the regular mail delivery having ceased, Dick was obligingly carrying a bundle of mail with him for the members of the different road crews around the loop. He left the mail in the car and, after enjoying a good meal, returned to continue his journey to Lake.

"Imagine his surprise, however, to find the package of mail not in the car but between the paws of a black bear in a nearby tree. Bruin was examining the packet intently, sniffing and turning it over in an inquisitive manner."

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Bibliography of the Writings of Edwin E. Slosson

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