

Pest Detectives

Pest Stopped Every 17 Minutes

An inbound plant pest was stopped every 17 minutes on the average at U. S. ports of entry in 1960, the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported today.

US defenses against crop and livestock diseases, harmful insects, and other farm pests were strengthened during 1960, but even so some pests succeeded in invading this country. The African red tick was found in New York and Florida, and the cattle fever tick was found in Florida. Oriental fruit flies were found in California.

And demonstrating the speed with which an uncontrolled new pest can spread in the jet age, the face fly had been found in 24 States by the autumn of 1960. This foreign livestock pest first became troublesome in the U. S. only during the previous year.

Regulatory agencies of the USDA's Agricultural Research Service intensified efforts in 1960 to bar foreign pests from entering this country and to wipe out or control those that have already entered. Their work is helping especially to prevent pest invasions favored increasingly by today's speed of transportation and record-breaking travel.

More than 800,000 animals and poultry passed quarantine inspection for entry into the United States in the year ended June 30, and 20,738 others were rejected. More than 120,000 pounds of prohibited or restricted foreign meats were confiscated from foreign ocean vessels or aircraft or at points of entry and post offices.

Every 17 minutes, on the average, ARS inspectors stopped an inbound plant pest at U. S. ports of entry. There were about 161½ million inspections of travelers entering the United States during the year—many of them repeats. This was an increase of almost 4 million over the preceding fiscal year.

Plant pest control workers inaugurated a cooperative program to eradicate the golden nematode, potato and tomato pest, from Long Island, N. Y., where it has been kept under strict control for 19 years. They also helped Illinois and Michigan halt the westward movement of the Japanese beetles and applied treatments to eliminate all known infestations of khapra beetles in the United States and Mexico.

The national fight against brucellosis, costly disease of livestock, entered a new phase when New Hampshire was pronounced brucellosis free—the first state to so qualify. Modified—certified status, an intermediate step in the eradication effort, has been achieved by 26 states.

Each working day, Federal meat inspectors kept about one million pounds of unfit meat from U. S. dining tables. During the year ended June 30, meat from more than 107 million animals was inspected and passed at 1,396 meat-packing establishments in 572 U. S. cities.

About 40,000 labels and sketches for use on Federally inspected meat and meat products—both domestic and imported—were reviewed to see that they contained the required consumer information and that no misleading statements or symbols were included.

Nearly 500—more than 86 per cent—of the Federally inspected meat-packing plants throughout the U. S. are now slaughtering one or more species of livestock

Corn Growth Is Much Faster On Windy Days

Corn yields may be reduced if lack of air movement for a number of sunny days prevents plants from getting sufficient carbon dioxide to sustain maximum growth, according to research by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and Cornell University.

Findings in studies directed by R. Lemon of USDA's Agricultural Research Service and Robert B. Musgrave of Cornell University, suggest that the rate of photo-

synthesis on sunny days is determined largely by the rate of exchange of carbon dioxide between air and corn. About 80 percent of the carbon dioxide needed by corn must be brought from outside the field by air movement.

Light, another important factor in corn growth, strongly influences the use of carbon dioxide by plants. As light intensity increases, so does the amount of carbon dioxide used. The more carbon dioxide available, the more the plants use, particularly when light intensities are high.

In evaluating effects of light and carbon dioxide on corn growth, the ARS scientists compared measurements from plants in a field with others made by Cornell researchers from field plants enclosed in a plastic growth chamber. The enclosed chamber permitted accurate measurements of environmental conditions—temperature, humidity, and changes in the amount of carbon dioxide

used when light intensity changed. The amount of solar radiation absorbed by the crops was also measured.

Data from the field were compared with those from instruments inside the plastic growth chamber. On days when the maximum rate with little wind, environmental differences between the

growth chamber and open field were small, the rate of photosynthesis in both places increasing. Late in the morning rate of photosynthesis in the chamber stopped increasing. On days when the maximum rate was reached, the rate of photosynthesis in the chamber was lower than in the open field.

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