

Is yours a deadly lifestyle?

UNIVERSITY PARK — Lifestyles are involved in nearly half of all deaths in the U.S. and Canada, a rural sociologist at Penn State reported recently.

Charles O. Crawford said there are six common hazards leading to unhealthy lifestyles. These are cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, overweight condition, lack of regular conditioning exercise, uncontrolled high blood pressure, and diets too rich in fat and sugar. He claimed such factors are involved in the deaths of 48 percent of Americans and Canadians.

Heredity was found to be the second most serious factor involved in deaths, contributing to 26 percent of all mortality. Environment, on the other hand, was related to only 16 percent of deaths. Crawford made his observations after examining studies of elements connected in some way

to deaths.

Least related to deaths, involving only 10 percent of mortality, was a factor called health care organization or medical system. This category included deaths from overmedication, deaths in surgery, and inappropriate diagnosis and treatment for a wide range of illnesses.

If deaths are to be reduced, lifestyles or health risks must be changed, Crawford affirmed. He noted, at the same time, that environment can be changed. Heredity on the other hand, cannot be controlled. It was noted, however, that heredity can be taken into consideration in developing one's lifestyle.

Risk factors often overlooked, Crawford said, include regular long distance driving every year, not wearing seat belts, and mixing alcohol and certain drugs. Also dangerous are stressful events

such as taking on a large mortgage or experiencing a divorce or loss of a loved one.

"We usually don't think of the latter items as hazards to our health, but experience shows they are important," Crawford stated.

He indicated Penn State's Cooperative Extension Service recently began a program of individual risk or hazard assessment, using computers. To participate, an individual completes a questionnaire inquiring about family history and a number of lifestyle components. When feasible, a blood sample is drawn for fat analysis, and blood pressure is examined.

All of this personalized information is entered into Penn State's computer system. Then it is integrated with national statistics on death rates for each person's age, sex, and race.

The next step is to obtain a personalized computer "printout" for each participant. The printout portrays a person's risk age — a measure which can be higher or lower than a person's actual age. A higher risk age means that an individual has the same chance of dying as an older person.

"If an individual smokes a lot, drinks in excess, is considerably overweight, has abnormally high blood pressure, drives a motor vehicle a high number of miles, and doesn't use a seat belt, he or she statistically has a much higher risk of dying than an individual not exposed to these risks," Crawford stated.

In such cases, he added, the individual's chances of dying may be equal to those of, for example, a 55-year-old white male when — in fact — the person is a 35-year-old white male.

"Chances" of "probabilities" are considered in figuring risk assessment, it was pointed out. People can have many hazards but, for some reason — often heredity — live into their 80's. However, for most persons, numerous health hazards mean a shorter life span.

After a person's risk age and related hazards are identified, the Penn State program focuses on risk reduction — often with the help of health professionals.

For most risk reductions, individuals need to change daily living habits, or should increase what is termed the "life-coping" skills. These include reducing undue stress and hazardous habits, and "respecting" dangerous technology such as farm and factory machines, autos, and electrical equipment. Such coping skills are accomplished by the individual alone or may be carried out best through group activity.

Feed alert, scabby wheat causes health problems

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — Heavy scab infestations in some wheatfields this year could cause animal health problems when too much scabby wheat is fed to livestock. This warning comes from Dr. Robert C. Hammond, Extension veterinarian and veterinary science department chairman at the University of Maryland.

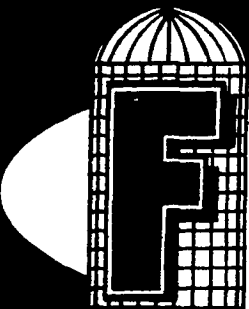
Hammond explained wheat scab is caused by a fungus which produces Fusarium mold. Toxins from this mold entering an animal's blood system can prevent the production of antibodies, rendering the animal susceptible to a wide range of diseases. Horses and swine are particularly sen-

sitive.

Unlike toxins produced by some other molds, the Fusarium toxins are not carcinogenic. That is, they do not produce cancer. And there is virtually no danger to humans from carryover in the milk or meat from animals which have consumed these toxins.

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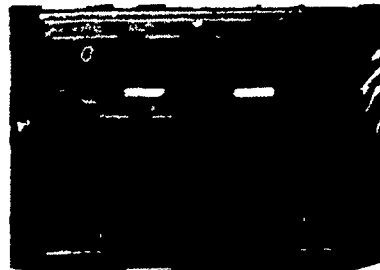
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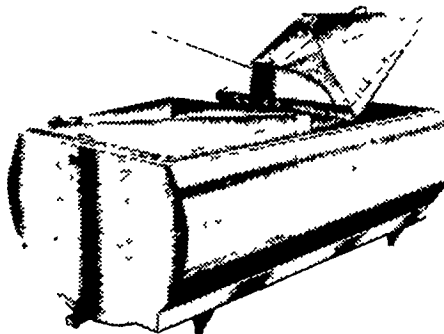
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