

Grain Belt Prepares For 'Hopper Attack

Poison Bait Offensive Awaits Insects as Federal, State Farm Leaders Seek Means of Protecting This Year's Bumper Crop

By JOSEPH W. LaBINE

Kids enjoy devilish pranks. Remember how we used to catch grasshoppers, pull their legs and watch them "spit tobacco"?

Innocent fun, perhaps, but today the lowly grasshopper takes his revenge. In Biblical days there were locust plagues, but no worse than the year-after-year grasshopper menace that has damaged America's most verdant crops every summer since the early 1930s. Preventative measures have met with minor success; this year the United States department of agriculture warns of an even worse invasion.

'Hoppers swarm like a horde of angry bees from one field to the next, ripping their way through ripening grain and leaving a path of desolation. They cut away fence posts, destroy shrubbery and finally splatter their gorged bodies against the windshield of a passing car. Sometimes they blacken the air and make men fear the millenium has arrived.

But when fall comes the grasshoppers disappear and farmers breathe easier, hoping the plague is gone forever. Then comes winter and with it come entomologists from state and federal departments of agriculture. They dig in the resting soil and shake their

heads. Last year's grasshoppers have deposited millions of eggs which will hatch under favorable conditions and bring more trouble next summer.

This routine has been repeated for several years but farm men have not been idle. They've discovered the most effective method of combatting 'hoppers is poison bait, a mixture of bran, sawdust, blackstrap molasses, crude arsenic and water. Innumerable tons of this delectable diet have been offered the grasshoppers since 1930; this year an estimated 178,000 tons will be needed and much of it will be supplied by the federal government.

Summer Morning's Pastime.

Poison bait is spread in the fields during late spring or early summer, before the 'hoppers get started. Any morning this month you can drive through a midwestern farm area and watch it being spread from a wagon or truck.

Unlike humans, grasshoppers are particular when they eat and the bait spreaders must be patient. In ordinary summer weather the feeding time is from 8 a. m. until noon. They figuratively stay in bed if the temperature is less than 65 degrees; moreover they can't be bothered with food if it's warmer than 90 degrees.

The grasshopper's private life is an interesting chapter in the study of entomology. He hatches from an egg which is buried in the soil by his mother the previous autumn. As many as 441 eggs are known to have been deposited in one tunnel.

In contrast to many other injurious insects, the grasshopper when newly hatched closely resembles his parents except that he lacks wings. Almost immediately upon emerging from the egg he is able to hop about quite actively, beginning his life of destruction. Forty to sixty days later he has grown into maturity.

During the growth period he sheds his skin five or six times. Cast-off skins are often mistaken for dead grasshoppers and are frequently the basis for mistaken reports that grasshoppers are "dying by the millions."

Fight for Existence.

Man is not the grasshopper's only enemy. Throughout its brief life the insect is plagued by parasitic two-winged flies which deposit maggots on the 'hopper. These maggots devour the internal portions of the grasshopper's body and soon cause its death.

But one of the most important factors in grasshopper control is the bird. Except for those living solely on vegetable matter, birds feed on 'hoppers and destroy large numbers of them. The assertion has often been made that grasshoppers are now so abundant because game birds are less numerous than for-

merly. But the worst grasshopper outbreaks in American history occurred in the great plains region 50 to 60 years ago when game birds were far more plentiful than now.

For years it has been believed that when grasshoppers come they remain seven years, destroying crops annually. After this period has elapsed they allegedly return to normalcy and are only a minor crop hazard until the next outbreak occurs. No definite proof of this theory has ever been offered.

It has been established, however, that dry, warm weather is favorable for grasshoppers and that the most severe outbreaks occur either during or following periods of drought. Perhaps most drought cycles are about seven years long, which would explain the 'hopper tradition.

Rains Haven't Helped.

But wet weather is unfavorable and great numbers of grasshoppers often die during wet springs from disease. Such is not the case this year, however, when the department of agriculture is planning the most active anti-grasshopper campaign in its history. The current spring has been wet in the Middle West and great plains area but grasshoppers will be bad anyway. Says the bureau of entomology:

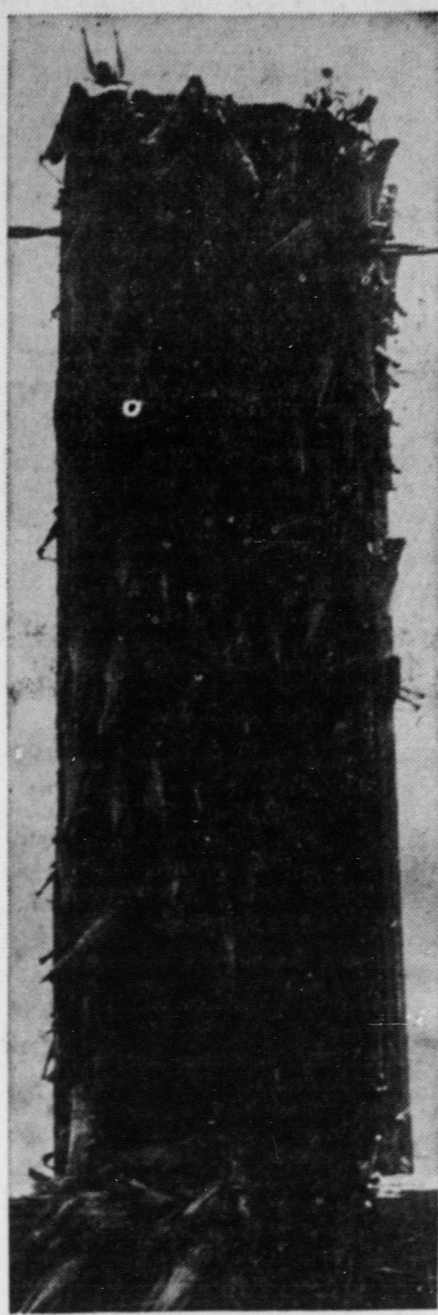
"Recent rains over a wide belt in the Middle West and great plains area have much delayed the hatching of grasshoppers and have held those which have hatched in the edges of fields. But the reported mortality because of weather has been low. Not enough have been killed to permit any letting down in the control campaign. The delayed development of the grasshoppers and growth of vegetation have kept grasshoppers out of the crops, but it is too early to indicate that control will not be needed over this wide area.

"The delayed hatch may make it necessary to make several applications of poison bait, rather than one or two, which would be sufficient if all the 'hoppers hatched at about the same time."

Widespread outbreaks are expected this year in South Dakota, Montana, Oregon, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The greatest trouble is expected in North and South Dakota, which together will require 65,000 tons of hopper bait. Total requirements this year for the entire nation are expected to be 178,000 tons; two states will need one-third of it!

Extra Generations.

The situation is made more acute by an unprecedented happening last fall. Whereas grasshoppers are known to hatch only once a year, last fall an extra generation appeared which ruined considerable fall sown grain and added greatly to the number of eggs which passed the winter in the soil.



GRASSHOPPERS—A menace to American agriculture that equals dust storms and drought.

Recognizing that successful control measures depend on co-operation, well-organized campaigns are already under way in many states headed by a trained entomologist who generally works with county agents. In turn come township and community leaders, mixing stations and bait-spreading crews. County financing has supported a large part of the campaign.

Last year 79,291 tons of poison bait were supplied at an approximate cost to the federal government of \$1,104,000. This made possible a harvest, in many sections where without control the crops would have been a complete loss. State co-operators estimated that crops worth more than \$100,000,000 were saved in the north central and great plains area. But despite these savings, the losses to crops where hoppers were not controlled reached nearly \$66,000,000.

Such is the picture of America's current agricultural pain-in-the-neck, a perennial nuisance that has driven more than one farmer to near insanity. Adding to the discomfort is the fact that these plagues have descended with greatest wrath upon those states which have suffered most harshly from drought and dust storms during the past eight years.

Disaster's Bedfellow.

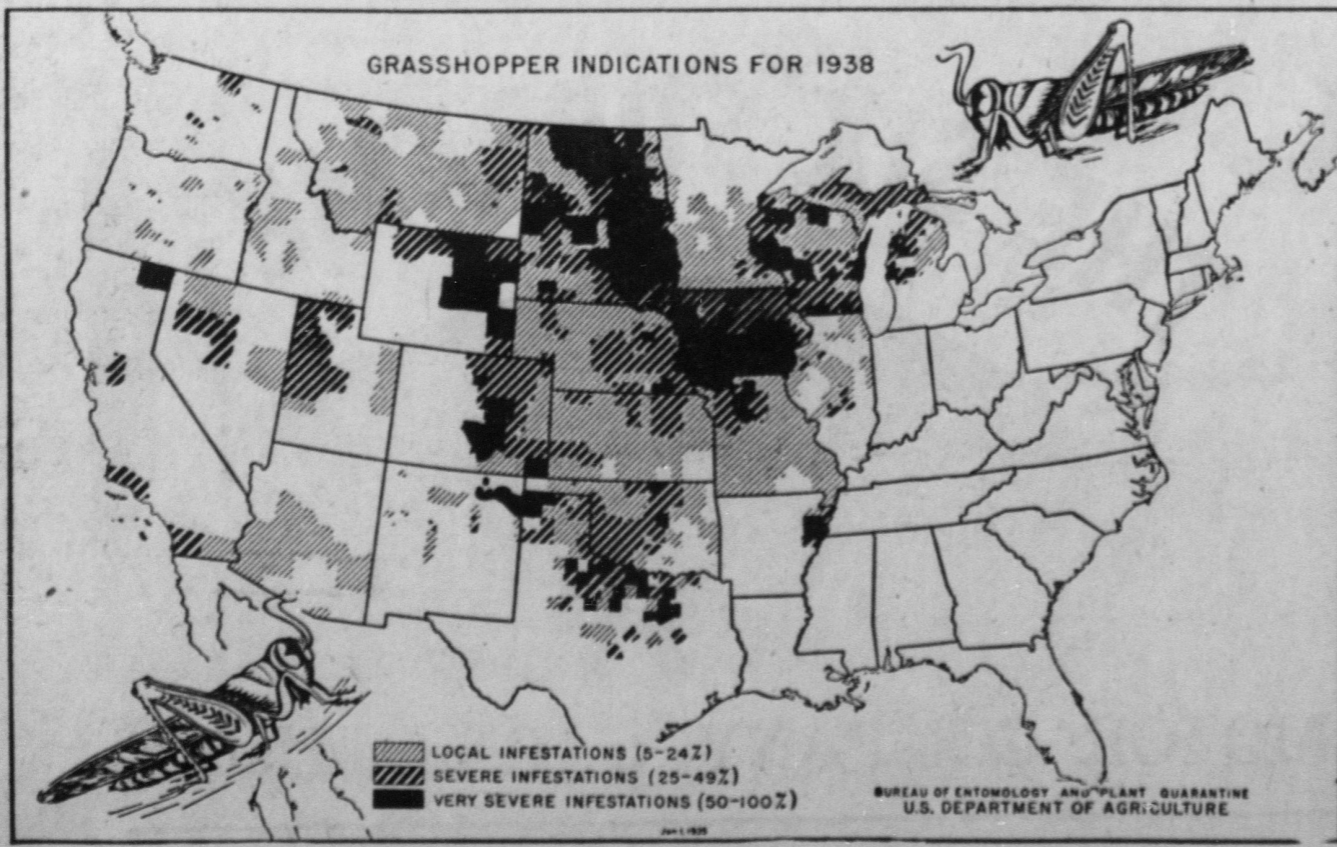
Perhaps it is logical that grasshoppers, dust and drought should go hand in hand and that one of these pestilences should lead to another. Lack of moisture encourages grasshoppers. The 'hoppers, in turn, destroy foliage and loosen the earth to be swept about at the mercy of a strong wind.

More than one visitor from the industrial East has looked upon this desolation and turned his eyes away, swearing that drought, dust and 'hoppers will never be conquered. But there's always another year and each spring the 'hopper belt farmer faces life confidently, imbued with an undying faith that his luck must eventually change.

So it follows that again this year he thinks it will change. Probably it will, because never since 1929 has the great plains area been so plentifully showered with spring rains. Maybe the rain will kill these grasshoppers; maybe the weather will become freakish and keep them from doing great damage; maybe the poison bait will work better than before.

Maybe. At least we'll hope so!

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Floyd Gibbons' ADVENTURERS' CLUB

HEADLINES FROM THE LIVES OF PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELF!



"Death Headed North"

By FLOYD GIBBONS
Famous Headline Hunter

HELLO EVERYBODY:

Now this is the story of an adventure that almost any one of us might have got into. Anyone who has ever ridden on a railroad train has taken a chance on finding himself in just such a terrifying situation. As luck would have it, it happened to Fenton Barrett of Shaker Hollow, South Salem, N. Y. And, boys and girls, I wish it to be distinctly understood that I am very glad it happened to Fent Barrett, and not to me.

Fent Barrett is an actor. He had just finished a run in a successful musical show on Broadway not long before he starred in the thriller he is going to tell us about now. When the show closed, he went south for a vacation, but he hadn't been there long when he got a wire telling him to come back to New York and start rehearsals in a new production.

Fent left that night for Washington, and in Washington he got aboard the train for New York—the train that was to carry him right smack into the most thrilling moment of his life.

Fire Started in the Wash Room.

It was a hot day, the first of August, 1928. Fent decided to ride in the smoker where he could take his coat off and be comfortable. Usually the smoker is up front, next to the baggage car, but in this case it was the last car on the train.

The train bowled along over the countryside, without any interruption, and without any hint of the drama that was to come. It was getting near the Big City, and the train porter came in and began cleaning up the car. Fent was sitting in the third seat from the front, and was watching the porter idly as he moved about. The train was coming into



The Whole Wash Room Was Roaring With Flame.

Elizabeth, N. J., and the porter, with a large bundle of old newspapers, had just gone into the men's wash room.

"That porter," says Fent, "had been in the wash room only a few seconds when suddenly he came leaping out into the aisle. As he did, I saw the reflection of flames on the highly polished door. The porter made a desperate attempt to close the door, but by this time the whole wash room was roaring with flame, and he was beaten back."

Fent jumped to his feet. He was one of seven men in the car including the conductor and porter. Before he could get out of his seat, the flames were almost on him, and he had barely time to grab his coat and brief case and dash to the rear of the car.

Couldn't Stop the Blazing Train.

Meanwhile, with all the windows open, the blaze spread through the car like wild fire. As Fent reached the rear of the car, he looked back, just in time to see the conductor reach for the signal rope to stop the train. The rope was blazing, even as he grabbed for it. As he pulled on it, it snapped in two. Their only way of communicating with the engineer—the only means of stopping that speeding train—was gone.

"We all crowded back to the rear platform," says Fent, "and divided three on each side. The porter had climbed over the iron gate and was hanging to the back end of the train for dear life. By this time half the car was on fire, and with us in the last car and the train doing sixty-five miles an hour, it certainly looked bad.

"One of the passengers became hysterical and the conductor had a hard time trying to keep him from jumping off the back end of the train. We were all choking and almost overcome by smoke and the fumes of burning paint and varnish. I felt myself getting panicky and dropped to my knees and put my nose to the floor, trying to get a good breath of air."

The fire was all through the car by this time—streaming right down the aisle and shooting out the door onto the rear platform. Fent felt something move beneath him. It was that iron lid which covers the steps. The porter had loosened it and was motioning the three men who were standing on it to step back so he could swing it open. They squirmed around until they could get it up, and then they crowded down onto the steps.

All Jumped at 30-Mile Speed.

The porter screamed to them not to jump. The flames crowded them harder now, and Fent was kept busy dodging broken glass and tongues of fire that licked back at him through the rear windows. The heat was so terrific that he made up his mind to jump soon, rather than be burned to death.

And then—the brakes went on. The train started to jerk and slow down. It slowed from sixty-five—to fifty—to forty. When it was going about thirty, Fent jumped, and the rest of them followed.

"I was thrown up against the bank," Fent says, "but I wasn't badly hurt. A few scratches and bruises—but I was too glad to be off that burning car to pay any attention to a little thing like that. The train went on for half a mile before it came to a stop, and we ran and caught up with it. By that time, the car we had been in was just a red-hot steel frame. Not a window or a seat left. And they were having quite a time trying to disconnect it from the rest of the train because the steel was so hot the brakeman couldn't touch the couplings. We got into another car, I fell into the seat exhausted, for it was then that I first realized what I had been through."

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Wild Dog Known as Dingo

Ancient as the race of dogs may be, nobody yet definitely has traced their kinship to other mammals. What sort or form of animal preceded the domesticated dog as we know him still is a moot question. However, there are some forms of the animal which more closely resemble the prehistoric than any of those commonly known. Among them is the native wild dog of Australia, also known as the dingo.

The Name Eunice

The name Eunice is of Greek origin and means "happily victorious." It appears in the Bible in II Tim. 1, 5, where the implication is of devout faith. This Eunice was Timothy's mother.

Discoverer of Steam Power

James Watt, Scottish engineer (1736-1819), was the first to realize the possibilities of steam power. He never made an electrical discovery, though his name signifies an electric power unit.

Oldest College Fraternity

Oldest college fraternity in the world, Phi Beta Kappa, was founded in 1776 as a social and literary society at William and Mary college, Williamsburg, Va. It spread to Yale (1780), Harvard (1781), survived the closure of William and Mary by Revolutionary battles in 1781. Since 1826 it has been a non-secret, purely honorary fraternity, choosing members on the basis of excellence in studies.

Grows Blue Grass

In a general way the southwestern section of Virginia grows natural blue grass; the Shenandoah valley and the tier of counties lying east of the Blue Ridge, called Piedmont, also grow a great deal of blue grass.

Scott's Curiosities

In Sir Walter Scott's old home, Abbotsford, can be seen the crucifix of Mary Queen of Scots, Napoleon's pistol and blotter, a tumbler from which Burns drank, Rob Roy's gun, and other curios.



WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARTON

NEW YORK.—France is beginning to think she has another Clemenceau in Premier Daladier, and she still has Marshal Philippe Petain, one of the few survivors of the great generals of the World War.

Two or three years ago, General Petain was counseling peace and conciliation with Germany. Now he warns the French people of their "serious situation in Europe," and urges them to consider realities.

It is quite possible that rope-skipping is mainly accountable for General Petain being alive, trim, fit and active at eighty-two. He is an inveterate rope-skiper, ejected from his apartment in 1914, because he jarred the plaster from the walls. This writer's record as to that goes only to 1934, but, in that year, he was still skipping diligently. Joffre, Foch and Maginot, among the French, Von Mackensen, Ludendorff and Hindenburg among the Germans — non-skippers all—have passed, but Marshal Petain lives on, venerated by his countrymen.

It was he who said, "They shall not pass"—on February 5, 1916, to be exact. He was the savior of Verdun, and, in this connection, a deft historian might discover that rope-skipping saved France. The general spent a solid week in an Automitrailleuse without sleep, and the London Daily News commented at the time that no man who was not in perfect physical condition could have survived such ordeals. It was suggested that his energy and endurance had turned the tide of war.

He was born Henri Philippe Benoni Omer Joseph Petain, the son of a baker in Couchy a la Tour.

Man Mountain Dean, the wrestler, running for the legislature in Georgia, is after only one seat, but he will need three or four if he is elected. In retirement on his farm, near Norcross, he still weighs 317 pounds. It is a unique contest for him, with no chance for his running broad-jump attack, in which he hurls his body against his opponent.

His career seems to have been mostly his wife's idea. Born Frank Leavitt, in New York, known as the "Hell's Kitchen Hillbilly," he did a hitch in the army and thereafter engaged in some desultory wrestling and mauling as a Soldier Leavitt. Nothing much came of it, and he began placidly taking on weight as traffic cop in Miami, Fla. Doris Dean married him and began prodding his lagging ambition.

He started grappling again, in Boston in 1933, with fame still eluding his half-nelson, when a German promoter took him on a tour of the Rhineland. This was more successful, and brought him to the attention of Alexandre Korda, who needed a double for Charles Laughton as Henry VIII in the wrestling scene. This came the famous whiskers, an important detail of his wife's clever showmanship in the build-up of the Man Mountain. It was she who persuaded him to take the name Dean and who managed the histrionics which made him a fabulous creature. He was born in West Forty-third street in 1891, weighing 16½ pounds.

GEORGE E. Q. JOHNSON, the slight, self-effacing, bespectacled man who sent Al Capone to Alcatraz, is devoting his life to social betterment.

He wants to make cities less fertile soil for crime, and to that end, would flush city and country children back and forth, interchangeably, to the benefit of each, he believes, and the nurture of good behavior.

It was as United States attorney that he deftly enmeshed Capone in a silken spider-web of evidence, laboriously gathered and spun. The next year, Herbert Hoover made him a federal judge, but he stayed on the bench only a year and then went back to his law practice.

He broke the gangs in Chicago. His story of how he snared Capone, told before the senate judiciary committee, with its tales of trapdoors and secret panels, was Grade A melodrama, but he didn't make it sound that way. He is a modest man, with no instincts of showmanship.

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