

The public was warned to discontinue the use of any dusting-powders with young babies, and a large number of samples of different brands of dusting-powder were taken throughout the country and examined for tetanus infection. While the great majority were free from infection, it was found to be present in samples of three different brands. In some cases also, gas-forming bacilli were found to be present.

As a result of these events, regulations under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act have been enacted to require that all talc or other mineral ingredients used in the manufacture of baby-powders must be sterilized by heat unless purified talc B.P.C. is used. The manufacturers of dusting-powders are introducing the necessary equipment for sterilizing talc, and already powders made from sterilized talc are on the market.

*Food Poisoning.*—There were 248 cases of food poisoning notified, and of these 158 occurred in February–March and were concerned with one outbreak. The food in question was cooked ham and the infecting organism *Staphylococcus aureus*. The ham was all cured and cooked at a provincial factory and distributed over a wide area, although the chief brunt of the infection affected Wellington. A cool store in Wellington in which the hams were received, and from which they were distributed throughout Wellington City and suburbs, was inspected on 5th February and found to be in a dirty, neglected condition. The refrigerating mechanism was defective and the temperature-control unit out of action. It was also found that the cardboard cartons in which the cooked hams were packed were being returned to the factory and used a number of times.

After these unsatisfactory conditions were remedied further cases came to light, and these were connected with hams despatched direct from the factory to country retailers.

Investigations at the factory where the hams were cured and cooked showed that insufficient precautions were taken to prevent possible contamination of the hams after cooking. Moreover, *Staphylococcus aureus* was recovered from the pickling-brine, from the pumping-pickle, and from racks in the cool chamber where the cooked hams were stored before despatch. Unfortunately, the lack of suitable laboratory animals prevented the confirmatory testing of these organisms for enterotoxin.

The actual source of the infection could not be determined. The hands and arms of all those handling the hams at the Wellington store were examined for skin infections but nothing abnormal was found. Similar investigations were made at the factory, also with negative results.

The heavy incidence in Wellington City as compared with other parts of the area supplied from this factory suggests that the infection arose in the Wellington cool store and was possibly transferred back to the factory by means of used cartons that were again used for packing hams.

The refrigerators at the cool store were thoroughly cleaned out and disinfected with chloride of lime, while at the factory the pickling-brine was discarded and the brine-vats steamed out. Recommendations were also made that the wooden tables on which the hams were cut up, and on to which the cooked hams were placed to cool, should be covered with stainless steel. Most important of all, the use of second-hand cardboard cartons were strictly forbidden.

The investigations revealed the very large traffic that takes place in cooked hams sent out over a wide area from a central factory. Cooked ham is a very perishable product, and it is not well suited for despatch over long distances by ordinary methods of transport. From the hygienic viewpoint it is far preferable that hams should be transported in the raw, dry state and cooked locally as required.