

# Britain Wants Ergot From N.Z.!

## How Country People Can Help A Most Worthy War Effort

By J. C. NEILL,

Field Mycologist, Plant Diseases Division,  
Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

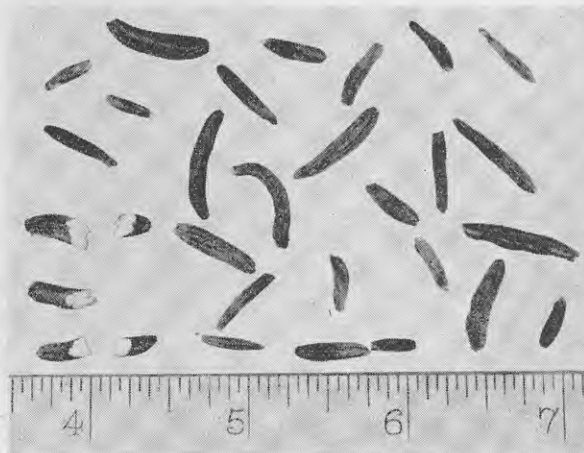


Fig. 1.—A sample of commercial ergot. On the left are three ergots cut to show the white interior.

A WONDERFUL opportunity is open to country people living near swampy areas to help in a most worthy war effort—the collection of ergot—and, incidentally, to tap this hitherto neglected source of personal and national income. Ergot is a fungoid disease of grasses that attacks the seed, replacing it with a leathery, elongated growth, black on the outside and white within. (See Fig. 1.)

Care should be taken, however, not to confuse smut disease with ergot. Smut disease, particularly of prairie grass (see Fig. 3) is sometimes collected in mistake for ergot. To test, break the black mass in half. If it is black all through and leaves a black powder on the fingers, then it is smut and valueless. Ergots break cleanly and show a whitish, cheesy centre.

Ergots are common on many grasses throughout New Zealand, but the largest and most valuable occur on tall

fescue—a grass which flourishes profusely in swamp areas all over the North Island and in many places in the South Island. Marram, cocksfoot, and water-grass are also good sources of ergot. From ergots there is extracted a drug that is of the utmost value in maternity and in the treatment of wounds.

### Value as Medicine

Before the war supplies of ergot were obtained by British and American manufacturing chemists from Central Europe, Hungary, Rumania, Spain, and Russia, where they were collected, mostly by children, from crops of rye-corn. Now, of course, these sources of supply are cut off, and, just when the need is greatest for the treatment of



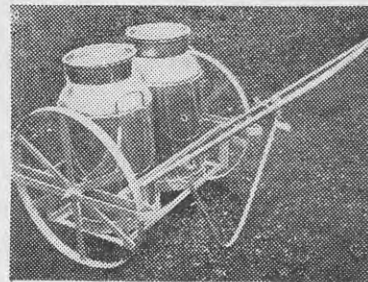
Fig. 2.—Ergot on tall fescue.

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