

How to Harvest and Clean Ergot

AT the time when ergot is most urgently required for the treatment of wounds, it is in short supply. Supplies which, in the past, were obtained chiefly from the mainland of Europe have now been cut off. Ergot is obtainable from the seed heads of grass plants, but it is most prolific and most easily collected from tall fescue, a tall grass which flourishes in rich alluvial swamps, particularly in the North Island.

Harvesting and Cleaning

The ergot is ready for collection in December. From then onwards, it

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can be harvested by cutting the heads with a sharp knife or sickle or by hand stripping of the heads. If the heads are cut they should be stood on end in a sunny position against a house or shed or spread out on the ground or, better still, on sheets of iron, bags, or

canvas until they are thoroughly dry. On wet days and in the evenings it is advisable to place them under cover. When thoroughly dry, the ergot is threshed by tapping the heads sharply against a piece of wood, so that the ergot falls out with a minimum of grass seed. The hand-stripped ergot should be laid out on sheets of iron or other material until thoroughly dry.

The mixed ergot and grass seed so obtained from the cut or stripped heads should then be winnowed to remove, as much as possible, all the foreign matter and to obtain as pure a sample of ergot as possible. In winnowing, as in all operations, care



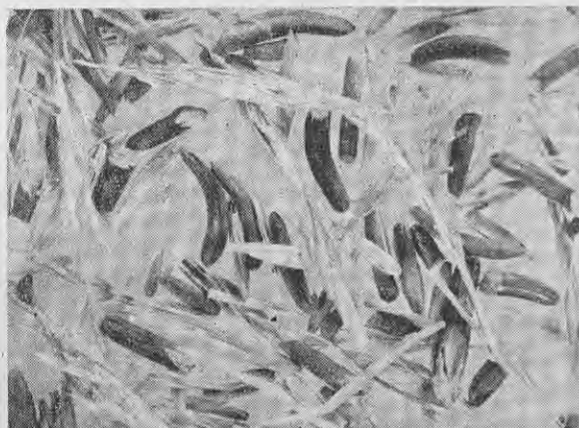
Grade 1.—Clean, unbroken, dry ergot, 8/- per lb., or 6d. per oz.



Grade 2.—Clean dry ergot but with some broken grains, 6/8 per lb., or 5d. per oz.



Grade 3.—Unbroken, dry ergot mixed with chaff, etc., 5/4 per lb., or 4d. per oz.



Grade 4.—Dry ergot mixed with chaff, etc., including broken ergot grains, 4/- per lb., or 3d. per oz.

Note: Grades 2, 3 and 4 are subject to variation in price according to amount of broken ergot grains and chaff.