

Health Notes for the Farm

The Undulant Fever Menace

TOWNSFOLK these days do not hear very much about undulant fever, but in the country districts, particularly the dairy-farming areas, it is a constant menace to human health.

Undulant fever is an unpleasant and very debilitating disease. It belongs to the list of diseases that are transmitted from animals to man, and in its way it is unique—because the same produces a different result in cattle from what it does in man. In cattle it is responsible for the unhappy and costly prevalence of contagious abortion, and in humans it produces the fever, which, in the United States alone, is said to affect 12,000,000 people.

It took research workers a lot of hard and concentrated work to find out the dual nature of the *brucellosis* germ, and it was a woman—Miss Alice Evans, of Washington—who discovered that the Bruce microbe (which causes undulant, or Malta fever in humans) was the same as the Bang microbe, which causes sterility in dairy herds.

A Simple Remedy

Having found this out, and having found out also that the source of infection for humans was the raw milk of the diseased cows, the next course was

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fairly simple. It was—treat the raw milk. And that is where pasteurisation of milk has once again proved its value in guarding human beings against the invasion of contagious disease.

As Miss Evans herself put it: "If there were no other reason for milk pasteurisation, it would appear to be folly to drink raw milk containing the Bang organism." The growing use of pasteurised milk in the populated areas has resulted in the virtual elimination of undulant fever in these areas, though a recent isolated case in a North Island town was traceable to the use of unpasteurised milk.

In the towns, only those who drink the raw milk are running any risk of contracting undulant fever. In the rural areas it is liable to break out at any time among people who handle cattle, pigs or goats, and who are careless about their personal cleanliness. And of course the general practice in

country districts of consuming the milk in an untreated state obviously leads to a greater spread of infection.

Anyone who lives in the country and drinks untreated milk from an infected cow is liable to come down with fever and vague pains. He may feel fine every morning, but in the afternoon his temperature rises, and he gradually loses strength. This may keep up for a long period. Symptoms range all the way from mild back-aches to bone and nerve infections, and heart disease. Scarcely an organ in the body is safe from infection.

Similar to Influenza

At the outset undulant fever in man is hard to distinguish from influenza. Characteristic symptoms are general malaise, headache, muscular pains, and high temperature. Profuse sweating and constipation are also symptoms. Sometimes the bout passes, and the patient congratulates himself on having thrown off an attack of influenza. On the other hand it may recur, and it has been known to drag on for weeks, and months, and even years. In fact, it is from this habit of producing wavelike accessions of fever that it gets its name—undulant.

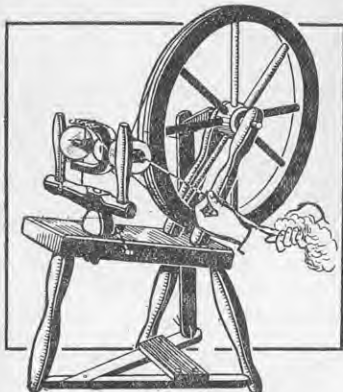
The only really comforting feature of the disease is that preventive action is simple. That is, drink only pasteurised milk. In most populated areas this is now possible. The treatment of milk on the farm, and in those households that do not use pasteurised milk, presents no difficulty. It is simply a matter of heating the milk to 155 deg. Fahr., stirring constantly; then set the pan at once in cold water, and keep stirring the milk until it is cool. At that temperature the bacteria cannot live.

There are people who say that the food value of milk is appreciably lessened by pasteurisation. This has absolutely no basis in fact, and the enormous increase in the consumption of pasteurised milk is abundant proof of the widespread switch away from this view. Undulant fever merely provides another argument to prove to doubters the great value of pasteurisation in the prevention of disease.

Don't

neglect early spring cabbage plants. For slugs and snails use burnt lime freely. It is best applied in the evening.

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