

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

LIBRARY
RECEIVED

☆ APR 12 1937 ☆
U. S. Department of Agriculture

1.9

I 773 Hh

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, April 15, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FEWER HUNCHBACKS." Information from the Bureau of Animal Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

"You won't see many hunchbacks under 15 years old, nowadays," a man said to me the other day. According to a leading medical authority, there are fewer crippled children than formerly.

"For the past twenty years children have been getting safer milk as more and more dairy herds have been freed from bovine tuberculosis. As a direct result of the increasing eradication of this disease we can point to an amazing decrease in the number of children whose bones and joints become crippled."

The speaker was Dr. Alexander E. Wight, chief of the Tuberculosis Eradication Division of the Bureau of Animal Industry. As he told me more about the extraordinary results of the campaign to eliminate bovine tuberculosis, I felt that every mother and homemaker in this country should know about this work.

Bovine tuberculosis, I learned, is similar to human tuberculosis or consumption, but while the germs may be carried from cattle to people, through both milk and meat, they do not often enter the lungs. Instead they affect bones, glands, and joints. Tuberculosis of the bones and joints is very deforming. The spine is the part of the body framework which is most frequently attacked. Then the person afflicted becomes what we call a "hunchback." Next to the spine the hip and knee joints may be affected, so that the sufferer becomes a cripple.

In 1917, which was 20 years ago, the Bureau of Animal Industry entered upon its active campaign to eradicate bovine tuberculosis. The work was backed by Federal, State, and local funds, and every President from Wilson to Roosevelt has approved the necessary appropriations. Money was needed for tuberculin in large amounts to make tests; for veterinarians to administer the tuberculin; and for reimbursing the owner if the inspectors ordered an animal to be slaughtered because it proved to be a reactor. A "reactor" is an animal that develops certain symptoms when tuberculin tested. Healthy animals show no symptoms, when tested. Tuberculous animals do.

As county after county eliminated the disease, it was observed that the death rate and the cases of bone and glandular tuberculosis among children dropped. City health departments began to require that all milk sold must come from tuberculin-tested cows, and also, as a further safeguard, that it must be pasteurized.

I 73 Hh

LIBRARY
RECEIVED

4/15/37

To understand what a difficult task confronted the veterinary scientists in 1917 we must have a picture of conditions before the campaign started. Here's one way of seeing it, through the meat inspector ^{U.S. Department of Agriculture} ~~U.S. Dept. of Agriculture~~. As you know, the meat of livestock intended for sale in interstate commerce must be passed as wholesome food by a Federal inspector at the slaughter house. ~~In the fiscal year 1916,~~ a total of 30,720 beef animals and 74,109 hogs were condemned as inedible because of tuberculosis. Let me explain here that swine as well as cattle are susceptible to this disease but sheep are affected only rarely.

To return to our figures, the loss of beef and pork for 1936 alone was equal to a trainload of live animals about twenty miles long. A trainload of feed, mostly corn, sixty miles long, was virtually wasted in producing those animals.

And that's not the whole story. While the human death rate from respiratory or lung tuberculosis, was going down before 1917, as a result of greatly improved medical treatment, there was an increase in the death rate from glandular, bone, and abdominal tuberculosis because of the steady increase of bovine tuberculosis in cattle. Hospitals reported more surgical cases of glandular tuberculosis. Doctors said that rural children, particularly, who probably received raw milk, suffered from this form of tuberculosis more than city children who received pasteurized milk.

Something had to be done, and it was. In the intervening twenty years of systematic eradication work, State after State has reported all of its counties "accredited" as practically free from bovine tuberculosis, that is, with less than one-half of one percent of its cattle affected. Would you like to know which State was the first one to win the distinction of being free? North Carolina, in 1928. Subsequent tests are made to make sure that a State keeps its high standing.

Ninety-six percent of all counties in the United States have now attained this status. Out of the 48 States, 43 are accredited. And of the other 5 States, 4 probably will be recognized as free of bovine tuberculosis by the end of the year. These four are New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and South Dakota. California is expected to be the last State to be accredited. The work started late and conditions were unusually difficult, but the Bureau of Animal Industry expects California to be accredited in a reasonable time.

In the entire United States in 1936 some 23 million cattle were tested, and only 7 tenths of one percent of them were found to be reactors. The number condemned for tuberculosis under Federal inspection in 1936 would make a trainload only 3 miles long as compared with one 20 miles long in 1916. As the cattle testing continues, this loss will be reduced until it is no longer a waste of any consequence.

At first the tuberculin test was used principally for purebred cattle, but the time came when all cattle owners in a county submitted their herds to be tested. Doubtful farmers who say their reactors slaughtered could observe how their organs were affected. They soon learned that the test was reliable, and that if it were given early enough, it would weed out undesirable animals from their herds and save loss on feeding. It would also act as a reliable guide to healthy animals when they were buying cattle to increase their herds.

"Our farmers are progressive," says Dr. Wight. "They do not want waste and inefficiency through disease, nor do they wish to jeopardize the health of their families and those to whom they sell milk, by having diseased cows. They have taken an active part in eradication work."
