

Historic, archived document

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

★ JUL 27 1935 ★

U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Saturday, November 9, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM WASHINGTON." Items of interest to women, from the United States Department of Agriculture:

--ooOoo--

Homemakers, when the chirping of the cricket is heard in the land, beware! These cheerful little insects are supposed to bring good luck. I don't like to disillusion you, especially if you have a pet cricket in your home -- but don't put too much faith in "cricket" luck.

Our correspondent in Washington, D. C., reports that these merry little insects are causing a lot of trouble around Washington this year. They've recently been specializing in the destruction of clothing and table linen to the despair of housewives with budgets closely trimmed.

Scientists in the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine trace the large number of crickets to an increase in the number of trash dumps for filling in and leveling ground. These dumps give the young crickets plenty of good hiding places, and plenty of food through summer. As the weather gets cold, they come out and head for nearby houses, entering by way of the basement and crawling up through walls and around pipes to the upper stories. They eat holes in all the cloth they can reach, especially if it is soiled. They seem to have a special fondness for rayon and silk garments, and for sweaters, and if they get hold of a used tablecloth, they'll chew out every spot. They may gnaw the bindings of books, too, and even cut holes in wall paper. If you leave any clothing on the floor, it may be riddled before you even know there are any crickets in the house.

The ideal answer to the cricket problem, the entomologists say, is no more trash dumps. Where dumps are necessary, the trash should be systematically unloaded in one place, and dusted over with dry sodium silicofluoride. The refuse should be covered with dirt as soon as possible. A poison bait, like the one used against grasshoppers, will prevent the crickets from migrating from trash dumps to buildings. . .

And that's all the information our Washington correspondent offers, about the cricket invasion. I see it's up to me to find out how to prepare the poison bait, and also, how to control crickets in the house. I'll try to get to that next week.

Now, let's talk about the weather. Late in September, you may remember, our Washington correspondent wrote us that Mr. Gregg, Chief of the United States Weather Bureau, had gone to Warsaw to attend a meeting of the International Meteorological Association.

Well, Mr. Gregg has returned to Washington. He reports that 42 countries were represented at the meeting in Warsaw, and that it won't be long now before the world's weathermen will have a universal language. That doesn't mean that all weathermen will have to learn Esperanto. They'll simply use figures, instead of words. They are going to further unify the codes, symbols, and units used in international exchange of weather reports.

As soon as the international symbols adopted by the conference in Warsaw are universally accepted, all the maps on which daily forecasts are based will look alike. Whether you're in Europe or Asia, Africa, Australia or America, a black dot on the map will mean light rain or drizzle, a star will mean light snow, and a plain circle will mean clear, cloudless skies.

Says your Washington correspondent: "Of course the weathermen didn't ask me for advice on preparing these maps, but I heartily approve of what they're doing. Just imagine," she says, "having to learn to say 'fair and warmer' or 'cloudy and colder' in Arabic, Chinese, or Russian. It's so much simpler to learn that a black dot means light rain or drizzle, in all languages."

We won't dispute that fact. Now, quoting again from your weekly letter:

"It's not so easy," continues our correspondent, "to translate weather reports of one country into the units of weights and measures used in other countries. For example, before weather reports can go out over the Arlington wireless towers near Washington, D. C., inches, used to measure atmospheric pressure in this country, must be converted into millibars. And all European countries, except Great Britain, translate our Fahrenheit temperature reports into Centigrade."

"Mr. Gregg says that weathermen in Europe are working on many of the same problems that interest American weathermen, especially, how to accurately record conditions in the upper air. He says that Russian meteorologists have perfected an instrument that is carried up by a balloon, and then, by means of a radio attachment, sends back a true record of temperatures, pressures, and humidities at the different levels of the atmosphere, up to several thousand feet."

Well, that's interesting. The more information we have about the upper air, the safer for airplane travelers.

And, speaking of airplane travelers -- here's a curious item from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine. Our correspondent says she's been looking over a list of the plant pests intercepted in 1934, and finds that the Bureau made 204 aircraft interceptions of insects. Some of these insects were traveling on a coconut from the Bahamas, others on Cape-jasmine from Cuba, on yams from Cuba, and orchids from the Canal Zone.

The Bureau also made four plant-disease interceptions -- one on an orchid from Costa Rica, two on a coconut from the Bahamas, and one on an orchid from Brazil.

Now that's what I call an exotic way to travel -- by airplane, on an orchid, from Brazil.

No more news items today. . . . I'll be with you again on Monday, as usual.

#####

