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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Thursday, April 2, 1942.

QUESTION BOX

Do slip covers protect furniture from moths?:
Do spirea bushes bring carpet beetles? :
Where buy cotton insulation? :
All right to buy paint? :
Easter eggs wasteful? :

ANSWERS FROM:

Scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

--ooOoo--

Two of our questions today remind us of warm weather ahead. They're about insects. Others bring up points more directly connected with the war. All the answers are from scientists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Here's the first letter:

"Do slip covers protect upholstered furniture from moths?"

No, definitely no, the entomologists answer. In fact, unless the upholstery fabric is one moths do not attack, a slip cover left undisturbed all summer may actually shelter and hide a lot of moth larvae as they feed on the upholstery fabric. So take the slip covers off your furniture frequently and go over the chairs and other pieces thoroughly with a brush or vacuum cleaner. In any case, upholstered furniture needs occasional dusting and brushing, although moths don't eat fabrics made of cotton, linen, rayon, or silk. As an added precaution some housekeepers tuck a few moth balls or flakes down in the cracks and crevices and under the cushions before putting the slip covers back. But the entomologists say these repellents don't do much good unless they're used in a tightly closed container.

When you take precautions against moths in furniture or clothing, you are also protecting your goods from another insect pest-- the carpet beetle. And speaking of carpet beetles, here's a question about them.

"I've heard that spirea bushes growing around your house will attract carpet beetles and that these insects will then get in the house from the bushes. I don't

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want to take any chances on getting carpet beetles in my house and wonder if we should cut down our spirea bushes."

No, is once more the answer. Entomologists of the Department don't take much stock in the prevalent belief that spirea, or any other flowering bushes, near the house will bring carpet beetles into the house. It's true that you sometimes see one kind of carpet beetle clustering thickly on the spirea flowers and other ornamentals late in the spring. The entomologists explain that these beetles just like to get into the sunshine, and maybe have a few meals of pollen from the flowers. There's no proof that the beetles you see on the bushes find their way back to the house. So don't cut down your spirea bushes because of a silly rumor.

The next correspondent has heard about cotton insulation for houses. "Where can I get definite information about buying and installing cotton insulation?" she asks.

Write to the Agricultural Marketing Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. for the addresses of firms that make cotton insulation, and directions for installing it. This is a very good time, the Marketing officials say, to consider putting cotton insulation in your house if it is so constructed that you can get at the studding and spaces under the roof and floors.

Cotton insulation is made of low-grade, short-staple cotton, too short for making into defense fabrics. This year there will be plenty of insulation material--about 12 million pounds of it, as compared with half a million pounds last year. Some will probably be used in defense housing, refrigerator cars, and so on, but homeowners are welcome to use cotton insulation too.

That point about being able to buy some goods and not others comes up in the next letter. A housewife asks: "Is it all right to buy paint for floors and woodwork this spring? I understand there is some scarcity of oils for paint."

Economists of the Department of Agriculture answer that you can buy whatever

the retailer has to sell. Wholesalers are the first to feel restrictions. When they can't get supplies of paint or anything else, the retailer won't be able to replenish his stocks. His present supply may have been bought many months ago. On a few things like sugar and tires the Government tells you directly what is restricted but on almost everything else used in the home, you can buy according to what is in the stores.

From paint for houses we jump to painted eggs-- Easter eggs. A mother asks:

"Is there any way to make use of the eggs the children color for Easter?"

After all these eggs are good food, and good food should not go to waste in times like these."

If the eggs have been properly cooked in the first place, there's no reason why you can't use them for a meal later in the day if you put them away in the refrigerator, after they have been duly exhibited and admired at the breakfast table. Why not just explain to the children that it's patriotic this year to eat the Easter eggs, and all other good food, so as to waste nothing. You could have creamed eggs for supper on Easter day, or an egg salad, or use them in any other way hard-cooked eggs are good.

The main thing is not to let the children play with their eggs too long, dragging their baskets around all day, visiting their friends to compare baskets or going "egg rolling" until the eggs are no longer safe to use as food.

With this caution from the home economists of the Department, we'll just wish everybody a "happy Easter" and sign off.

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