

UNDULANT FEVER

(Written for "The Listener" by Dr. H. B. TURBOTT, Director of the Division of School Hygiene, Health Department)

THE Hamilton Borough Council was worried at a recent meeting. They set up a committee to investigate and report. A case of undulant fever had occurred in the borough. The mayor considered it the duty of the council to protect its inhabitants or see that they were protected. In the United States, the law insisted upon the pasteurisation of milk for human consumption. He thought New Zealand would be well advised to follow that lead. Only one milk vendor in Hamilton was able to supply pasteurised milk.

Here, in one of our boroughs, a tragedy of preventive medicine is brought to light. A disease that could be prevented, and need not afflict anyone in our cities and towns, strikes again and again. Undulant fever is a disease in humans caught from animals—goats, cattle and swine. Malta Fever from goat's milk you are familiar with. Have you connected abortion fever in cattle with undulant fever in man? A family of germs called "brucella" causes the same disease, although given different names in goats, cattle, swine and other domestic animals.

Farmers and agricultural workers, veterinarians, abattoir workers and anybody handling abortion fever infected animals must depend on vigilance in personal hygiene to protect them. The disease in cattle has no symptoms, except those associated with the act of aborting. Cows, for example, do not seem unhealthy and do not die from the disease. They produce less milk, lose their calves, and may become sterile. The germ is present in the womb at abortion time, but later may be found only in the udder. For years it may remain there, damaging the udder and appearing regularly in the milk. So the disease is passed directly to farm folk who forget to wash thoroughly after handling infected animals—not only cows; swine, goats, sheep, horses, etc.—and indirectly to townspeople who drink raw, infected milk.

Similarity to Influenza

Undulant fever in man is a disease hard to distinguish from influenza at the beginning. It begins with general malaise, headache, muscular pains and high temperature, especially in the afternoons. There is profuse sweating and constipation. The particular bout passes, and may be all in lucky folk,

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the ages of 21 and 60, whereas for women jurors the lower age limit is 25?" "No," said Mrs. Dreaver firmly. "Till she's 25 or more a girl hasn't enough sense or knowledge of the world to make her a good juror. And, of course, the same applies to a man. Take any child of 21 and what is he thinking about? Cardboard keys painted gold, or some such nonsense. However, although the Statute says '21' in the case of men I don't think that in practice you'll find many jurors under 25."

—M.I.

who think they've had influenza. But in less lucky people there are relapses—more "influenzal" attacks—and the disease drags on for weeks, or months, or even years. It is often wrongly diagnosed as tuberculosis, typhoid fever, and so on. The diagnosis is confirmed by blood test.

In New Zealand the disease is more common in rural areas where milk is consumed unpasteurised, and farmers and workers infect themselves or others in their households by being careless about personal cleanliness after handling infected animals. In towns, only those who drink unpasteurised milk can get the disease. If you have followed your daily papers, you will remember many references to abortion fever in our herds, and attempts to use vaccines to get abortion-free herds. The blood test reveals the presence of the disease in cattle as well as in man. Attempts to use this and build up abortion free herds by isolation and disposal of reactors have not always been successful, and the task of freeing our dairy herds of abortion fever will be a difficult one for all connected with the industry.

Undulant fever can be a protracted, debilitation illness. Any parent who has seen a child suffer with it is an ardent advocate for pasteurised milk. Fortunately, that is all townsfolk have to do, buy and use only pasteurised milk. The food value of the milk remains, but the germs are killed. If you live in the country or in towns that do not practise pasteurisation of milk, home pasteurisation is simple—heat the milk to 155 degrees, Fahrenheit, stirring constantly; set the pan at once in cold water and keep stirring until cool.



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