

United States Department of Agriculture Special Page

Bulletins and Special Articles Issued by the Government, of Interest to the Northwest;
Suggestions Covering a Wide Range of Activities; Results of Federal Investigations, Etc.

Authorities Breaking Up Big Traffic in Bad Eggs

FEDERAL, state and city authorities are now actively co-operating in Illinois to put an end to the illegal traffic in rotten eggs. From evidence already gathered, there seems to be a definite market in Chicago for "rots and spots" at \$2.00 a case of 30 dozen. In consequence, rots and spots from all over the surrounding country have been coming into Chicago in large numbers.

In the past the delay necessary to secure authorization from Washington to make the seizures under the Federal food and drugs act has proved a serious handicap in breaking up the traffic. With the co-operation of the state authorities, however, this delay is now largely obviated. Under the detention section of the state law governing this matter, state inspectors are able to hold suspicious shipments for examination and further investigation.

The state authorities being on the spot are able to act with great promptness. In this way not only are seizures made possible, but the necessary steps toward criminal prosecution are also facilitated. One of the firms in Chicago handling these bad eggs has already been tried by a state court and found guilty. Shipments of bad eggs are also being reported to the authorities in Chicago by Federal, state and city inspectors in order that these eggs may be traced to their ultimate destination.

Although there is a certain demand for inedible eggs for technical purposes, such as tanning leather, most of the rots and spots that reach Chicago are first broken and frozen, and then sold to bakers for use in cakes and other forms of food. In one instance, at least, a shipment of these eggs was traced to a firm which admitted that they had no use for them except in food.

As a matter of fact, Federal inspectors have been able to secure ample evidence of the use of unfit eggs for this purpose. Before they had the active co-operation of the state authorities, however, it was difficult to act with the promptness required to obtain satisfactory results. Now, with the state and Federal authorities working together, it is believed the traffic can be broken up very readily. In this connection it is pointed out that most of the firms using these unfit eggs probably do so reluctantly, believing that the competition of others forces them into the traffic. However, it has been amply demonstrated by the Department that the frozen and dried egg business is a successful and important industry only when based on the use of good eggs, handled under special conditions.

Another important result of the work in Chicago it is hoped will be to persuade other cities and states of the necessity of assisting the Federal Government in destroying the traffic in bad eggs. That this can be done has already been demonstrated in Trenton, N. J., where 11 indictments have been found on the charge of conspiracy in connection with this business.

Such criminal prosecutions it is believed will do far more to put an end to the traffic than any number of seizures or fines. The profit in the business is so great when conducted on an extensive scale that the dealer can well afford an occasional fine. His rots and spots cost him so little that when his goods are seized the loss is insignificant, and in many cases he has no reputation at all to suffer from the consequent exposure.

In this connection the general information which appeared in the service and regulatory announcements of the Bureau of Chemistry, Department of Agriculture, issued August 25, 1914, concerning the denaturing of food products not intended for food but intended for technical purposes, will be of interest to those who deal in certain food products which consist in whole or in part of decomposed material, such, for example, as frozen or dried eggs shipped in interstate commerce for technical purposes. If such products are not denatured before shipment seizures will be recommended in all cases of interstate shipments of such products. This course will be followed regardless of the labels under which the products are sold.

No action will be taken, however, in the case of decomposed food products which have been denatured in such a way as to prevent their use for food purposes.

Tests Made With Treated Nitrogenous Trade Wastes

THE fact that a number of manufacturers of fertilizers are now using treated nitrogenous trade wastes such as hair, fur, garbage and other animal and vegetable matter as bases for fertilizers has led the Bureau of Soils of the United States Department of Agriculture to investigate the effect of processing on these substances.

These substances in their raw state contain a certain amount of nitrogen, but in a form which it is difficult for the bacteria of the soil to break up and make fully available for plant use. Hair and such substances are especially resistant to the nitrogen transforming or ammonifying bacteria natural to the soils.

The manufacturers, therefore, have been treating these raw products with sulphuric acid, strong alkalis, or similar chemicals, with the idea of making these materials more readily available for plant use.

Such treated fertilizing materials have been tried out in the Department's laboratory and the results of these processes have been recorded in Department Bulletin No. 158, "The Nitrogen of Processed Fertilizers." This bulletin, which is designed to be helpful to fertilizer chemists, gives in detail the various chemical changes which take place in the materials when treated by different processes.

In general, the conclusion is that treatment of nitrogenous trade wastes transforms the material into a form more easily attacked by the bacteria in the soil and also renders certain substances in it more directly available for use by the plant.

Ornamental Plants Being Shipped In From Belgium

SHIPMENTS from Belgium of ornamental plants containing from two or three plants to 1000 plants in each shipment, have been coming into the United States at the rate of 50 a day, according to the Federal Horticultural Board. While France sends more nursery stock during the year than all the other European countries combined, during October and November more ornamental plants have come from Belgium than from all the others combined.

The Belgium shipments come via Holland, the territory where they originate being on the Dutch border. The shipments come largely to brokers in New York City, who distribute them to individuals.

France, which sends much of our imported fruit stock as well as ornamental trees, also continues to ship, the territory where these stocks originate being west of the war zone. The Federal Horticultural Board has cabled the French government regarding the maintenance of the inspection service and has received through the French Ambassador information that the service is being maintained. Large importers of French stock have since confirmed this advice.

Under the existing European conditions there may naturally be expected some irregularity in compliance with our own regulations, and certain leniency may occasionally be necessary, especially where safety can be fully insured by adequate inspection on this side.

Weather Bureau Takes Up New Lines of Public Work

SEVERAL new lines of work for the benefit of the public, and especially of the farmers, according to the annual report of the Weather Bureau, were inaugurated during the year. Others recently begun have been extended into portions of the country where the growing importance of agricultural pursuits have made them of increased value.

A special service given to orchardists and raisers of tobacco, oranges, cranberries and certain other crops has been rendered by means of frost warnings issued in Spring and Autumn. Close attention is paid by the forecasters to the needs of these crops at critical periods, and the growers are kept fully advised as to the dangers of frost and are warned of the necessity of resorting to measures of protection through artificial heating and smudging, or flooding the bogs in case of cranberries.

The establishment of a "cattle region service," through which bulletins containing statements of weather conditions over the stock ranges of the Texas panhandle and adjacent regions are issued, constitutes a new feature of the bureau's work. This has been particularly effective as affecting the cattle industry of the great Southwest, having proved of such material value as to create a demand for its continuance throughout the entire year, instead of from April to October as at present.

Another opportunity for service has been found in the timbered region of the West during periods of unusual drought. This has been taken advantage of through the issue of special forecasts of hot dry winds, which are disseminated directly to the officials of the fire patrol of the forest service and other similar organizations, placing them on their guard at times of unusual danger of fire inception.

A feature of considerable moment to scientists and students of meteorology was the daily issue of a weather map for the entire Northern Hemisphere, begun by the bureau last January. Unfortunately, the issue of this map was necessarily suspended at the outbreak of the present European war.

Explorations of the upper air and studies of solar radiation were continued by the bureau during the year. No small light has been thrown upon obscure features of weather control through the information already obtained of conditions prevailing in the upper atmosphere, and continued investigations are expected to disclose additional valuable facts. Active field work of this character was transferred during the year from Mount Weather, Va., to Fort Omaha, Neb., where more favorable conditions for atmospheric exploration exist.

law was enacted and will be strictly enforced. What the farmer was unable to do for himself the law contemplates having the seedman do for him.

Plenty of Notice Given.

"Seed dealers throughout the state should take notice that, since plenty of time has been given them by the Commissioner's office to learn the provisions of the law and arrange their stocks in conformity with it, beginning with the new year all stocks will be inspected as rapidly as possible and all provisions of the law actively enforced. On the other hand, it is felt by the Board that farmers and the public generally should co-operate with the Commissioner in every way possible, especially by notifying him of any dealer exposing for sale any seed not legally labeled both as to purity and germination quality."

"With the seed law properly enforced Oregon will no longer be a dumping ground for inferior agricultural seed not salable in any of our adjoining states, all of which have seed laws. Further, the reputable dealer that wishes to do nothing but an honest business will no longer have to compete with low-grade, inferior, cheap seed, which is never cheap at any price. And most of all, farmers will not have to buy such inferior seed without knowing that it is inferior. The result will be not only a more desirable and prosperous business for the seed dealers but an increase of hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in the incomes of the farmers through use of better seed."

Will Enforce Oregon's Seed Law

BEGINNING with the new year, Oregon's pure seed law is to be actively enforced. When the law first became nominally effective the seed dealers of the state had already bought their seed supplies for 1914 and it was felt by the Pure Seed Board that it was only fair to allow them an opportunity to examine their stock, get rid of all that did not come up to the standard of purity set by the law, and have their houses in order for the coming season.

In the meantime the State Dairy and Food Commissioner, J. D. Mickie, was authorized by the Pure Seed Board, of which Professor H. D. Scudder, who is in charge of the College seed-testing laboratory, is chairman, to carry on a campaign of education among the seedmen and farmers, acquainting them with the terms of the law and the best manner of complying with it. The Board met in Portland on December 15 to consider the progress of this campaign and to determine the best means of carrying the law into effect. The steps taken at this meeting are summarized by Professor Scudder as follows:

"The Board found that the Commissioner, who is made by the seed law responsible for its enforcement and for all prosecutions for violation, has been active in this campaign. He has secured lists of dealers and supplied them with copies of the law, fully explained."

Law Favorably Received.

"The law is very favorably received by the three or four leading seed houses that do the major share of the business. These at once took steps to comply with its provisions. These large houses are rapidly getting their stocks in shape, since they recognize the value of the law in putting their business on a high plane of integrity and bringing them the confidence of farmers who want nothing but seed of standard purity and germination quality. There are, however, a great many small dealers throughout the state, who have not been reached by the office and are not familiar with the law. Many of these dealers handle seeds merely as a side line of some larger business, such as groceries, feed, mill products and hardware, and are apparently unaware that the law applies to them. That it does so apply is clearly seen from the following summary of its provisions:

"Every package of seed of one pound or more in weight, which is exposed for sale within the boundaries of the state of Oregon, must be labeled plainly and correctly with the name of the seed contained and with

the purity and germination thereof; and further, no seed containing certain noxious weed seeds, such as dodder, Canada thistle and the like, can be sold at all in Oregon.

Application Wide.

"It is thus seen that the law applies to every dealer in the state except those who sell in small packets of less than a pound weight. A list of about 100 small dealers in Portland has been prepared by the Commissioner's office, each of which will be visited before January 15 by a deputy, who will explain the law fully and at the same time give due warning that its requirements must be complied with at once. Another visit will be made in one month to see that all requirements have been complied with. By thus clearing up the stocks of Portland dealers that largely supply small dealers throughout the state, the standard of stocks handled by the small country dealers will be improved automatically. The same procedure will then be enforced in every part of the state, for which purpose lists of dealers are rapidly being prepared, until the entire stock of agricultural seeds in every part of the state is in the best condition possible for the coming business with the farmers."

"It now seems probable that many of the small dealers handling seeds as a side line will drop out of the business entirely rather than bother with meeting the requirements of the law. This will concentrate the business more among dependable seedmen that are making every effort to handle only the very highest class of seeds that comply with the standards of purity and germination. Nothing better than this could result for the farmer."

Small Dealer Unreliable.

"It is the small dealer as a rule that cares least about the quality of the seed he sells, often underselling reliable dealers because of the cheapness of his goods and reaching the farmer with low quality seeds that do incalculable damage, not only in spreading harmful weed pests but also decreasing the yield by means of seeds that grow but weakly or not at all. Thus a large part of the farmers' profits in both labor and investment is thrown away before he starts to plow. Since all seed of a kind look so nearly alike the average farmer does not recognize the enormous difference of quality and the immense importance of paying a few cents per pound more to dependable seedmen who furnish only high-grade seed. It was for this purpose, indeed, that the