

Rats, Like Mink, Are Expensive

With the acute problem rats are causing in the inner city and the accompanying danger they present to all parts of the area, Joseph DeSantis, associate public health sanitarian for the county, has prepared a series for the Courier-Journal providing insight on the problem.

By JOSEPH DeSANTIS
Monroe County Department of Health

Rats are trouble. Make no mistake about it.

Wherever they occur in number, they have a two-fold impact on humans:

1 — They produce a health problem in that they bite and are potential transmitters of disease.

2 — They produce an economic problem by attacking property and foodstuffs.

What are some of the more important diseases that are considered rodent-borne?

If you remember what you learned in history, you will recall the Black Death that swept Europe a few centuries ago, killing millions of people.

This disease, also known as bubonic plague, is caused by bacteria that are transmitted

by certain fleas that may inhabit the fur of rats.

Fortunately, there have been no outbreaks of plague in this country. There has been an occasional isolated case on the West Coast, but none East of the Mississippi River.

Other potential rat-borne diseases include murine typhus fever, hemorrhagic jaundice, rat bite fever and rickettsia pox, all of which, like the plague, have been fortunately absent from our community.

One rat-borne disease which may have occurred here is salmonellosis, or in layman's terms food poisoning. This unpleasant illness is caused by a germ called salmonella, which can come from a variety of sources.

The rat is very apt to have salmonella in its urine or feces due to the filthy way it lives and feeds. So an infected rat has access to food and urinates or defecates on this food, and if the food is not thoroughly cooked, then the person eating the food may come down with salmonellosis.

In our community, rat bites are of more immediate importance to public health than rat-borne diseases. In the last three years, 32 rat bites have been reported to the Monroe

County Department of Health. We suspect that many bites were never reported.

Of the reported cases, the victims usually have been infants, or small children who attempted to "play" with rats.

Anyone who is bitten by a rat should have medical attention, including a tetanus immunization.

Every rat bite should be reported to the Monroe County Department of Health. To do this, simply call 442-4000 and ask for Rodent Control.

On the economic side of the rodent problem, it has been estimated that it costs the American people \$250 million a year to keep rats fat and healthy.

That estimate is based solely on the cost of food they eat.


We have often been asked how many rats are in Rochester and Monroe County. The answer to that is unknown. There is a rule of thumb for urban areas to calculate one rat for every human. On this basis the rat population would approach 700,000. But it is purely a "guesstimate."

One thing seems certain, however. The rat problem in our community is larger than anyone thought it was. We say this because since the County Department of Health began the intensified rodent extermination program in October 1967, we have received 1,752 complaints of rats, more than double the number we used to receive. We believe the increase is due to the fact that residents now know whom they can complain to about rats.

NEXT WEEK — Methods of extermination and control.

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New Sex Instruction Termed Successful

Dr. Gerald T. Guerinot, chairman of the diocesan committee on sex education, said this week of the new sex instruction in Catholic schools. "The program has been in effect long enough now for us to say that it is a success. Those in favor of it," he added, "are in the vast majority."

Statistics show that out of 1059 responses to a questionnaire mailed last spring, 1050 parents approve of having human sexuality taught in Catholic schools. Those parents disapproving numbered 103, or about 5.9 per cent.

"The purpose of the program," according to a statement issued by the committee, "is to provide for the school the direction it needs to assume its role in reacting to the Vatican II mandate for a positive and prudent sexual education. It aims to help the young Christian to grow up with a concept of the sacred nature of sex, to develop respect for the opposite sex, to make clear the serious obligations that accompany God's gift of sex and to emphasize the family orientation of sex."

Father Daniel Brent, associate superintendent of diocesan schools, remarked on the reactions of the students in the program: "We have received a number of letters from students praising the program and saying they wished such a course had been started earlier."

Dr. Guerinot told of the reactions across the country to the course of studies instituted by the diocese. "We have received requests from a number of dioceses for information: Seattle; Auckland, New Zealand; Baltimore... are a few. We expect our course to be used on a nationwide scale in the near future."

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67 Bishops Share in Mission Plan

"It seemed rather strange and eerie to be talking on the phone with a priest who only a few days previously had come out of Biafra on a plane returning from one of his risky, near-flights," commented Monsignor John F. Duffy, diocesan director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

Holy Ghost Father Michael Reynolds, representing Bishop Anthony Nwedo of the Diocese of Umuahia in Biafra, was the Rochester Diocese to part in the Missionary Cooperation Plan for 1968.

It was Father Reynolds' appeal to all the needs of a Missionary Bishop and to help up a collection for this part of the mission world, now caught up in a cruel and bloody war.

"Sixty-seven Missionary Bishops shared in the Missionary Cooperation Plan this year," Monsignor Duffy said, "and it came from every continent except Australia."

From Europe came the Bishop Paul Verschuren of the Diocese of Helsinki, and from Anchorage, Alaska, there was a letter in the person of Archbishop Joseph Ryan, a native of Albany, N. Y.

"For a second year in succession the Missionary Cooperation Plan in the Diocese passed the one hundred million dollar mark," Monsignor Duffy observed. "In 1967 total for this phase of our mission work was \$103,783, and this year the amount is \$110,120. But there are 10 parishes yet to have this special appeal in November or December. Therefore, we should bite to equal or even to exceed the tremendous figure of 1967."

Five Missionary Dioceses share in the Plan because of the visit of either Maryknoll Mission Bishops or Maryknoll Priests representing these Bishops: Diocese of Guatemala in Central America, Jull in Peru, Iloilo in the Philippines, Inchon in Korea, and Taichung in Taiwan all shared in the Plan the Diocese of Rochester.

Although 67 Missionary Dioceses participated in the Missionary Cooperation Plan for 1968, "about 20 Missionary Bishops actually visited our Diocese personally," the diocesan director noted. "The other 47 Dioceses were represented by Missionary priests who had served in the dioceses, or in that part of the mission world."

Many different reasons brought the Bishops to America: collections in other American Dioceses, visits to related medical treatments, and so on. Some of them visited Catholic Relief Headquarters in New York City. Others conferred with editors of Catholic publications for guidance in developing a Catholic press in the mission lands.

"Our people want to be involved," Monsignor Duffy included, "in a very specific missionary activity. And the Missionary Cooperation Plan is a way in which they can be involved in some particular mission Diocese by hearing firsthand of the needs."

"But there is still the tremendous, fantastic problem trying to assist not just 67 Missionary Bishops who need direct help from the Diocese 1968, but also the more than 700 other missionary dioceses who share in the results of Mission-Sunday appeal. We counting on the people of the Diocese of Rochester to help meet these pleas for assistance."

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