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Saturday, October 10, 1936
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS NOTES FROM WASHINGTON." Information from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

The news in today's Department of Agriculture letter is about a couple of "million-dollar bugs" -- insects, to use the proper term. Our correspondent is reporting from Washington some facts about two familiar household insects that cost this country millions every year.

But let me read you the news exactly as she writes it. She says: "When you see a cockroach scurrying off in the kitchen, or when you see a clothes moth flying in a closet, does your mind immediately picture several million dollars lost from the national pocketbook? If not, you haven't been following the careers of these common house-pests closely. But the entomologists of the Department of Agriculture have. They not only have made a special study of these insects but they are receiving great quantities of letters every year from all parts of the country asking for advice on controlling these pests. Just ask the entomologists. They know how costly these common insects are.

"Take the cockroach, for example. Just consider his activities. The entomologists report that cockroaches are 'notoriously destructive and annoying not only in the kitchen and pantries of houses, restaurants, and hotels but also in stores, factories and even libraries.' They not only lunch on foodstuffs of all kinds but also on book bindings and fine fabrics. Worse still, they pollute foods over which they run -- are actual disease carriers. Owners of apartment houses, hotels, hospitals and business establishments, to say nothing of housewives, spend large sums for pest-control services and a large part of this money goes for controlling cockroaches. The entomologists estimate that the American public spends several millions annually to fight cockroaches.

"As for clothes moths, their expense account runs into the millions, too. They are costly both because of the damage they do to clothes and household furnishings and because of the amount spent in controlling them.

"Perhaps you are thinking that October is a strange time of year to be discussing clothes moths and cockroaches and other household pests. Spring is the orthodox time to worry about moths and put the clothes down in moth balls or flakes. That's true enough. But nowadays when most dwellings, whether they are homes, apartments or hotels, are kept comfortably warm all winter, these insects can prosper the year around. After all, the right temperature and plenty of food are the chief necessities of life to these pests. So you can no longer just leave moth control to the weather in winter. And this seems a good time to get pointers from the entomologists about keeping down moths and cockroaches in your comfortably warm house this winter.

"First, about cockroaches. If your house is so tightly built that it is insect-proof, then getting rid of these bugs is not difficult. One good method is to starve them out -- keep the kitchen and pantry so clean -- every crack, cranny and shelf so immaculate that the roaches can't find a bite to eat anywhere. And then keep all food supplies in the ice-box or in insect-proof containers. To hasten the roaches' departure, you can use sodium fluoride powder along the back of shelves, in cracks, or drain-boards and other places where roaches run frequently. This powder is the best all-round cockroach remedy aside from fumigation. But remember that it is poisonous to man as well as to roaches if taken internally and should be kept out of food and away from children and pets.

"The entomologists also suggest that one good way to prevent roaches from getting into your home is to watch carefully all baskets or boxes of food and laundry brought into the house. Roaches hide among packages and about clothes and frequently are carried from place to place by this means. You can kill these stray roaches with a fly swatter, or, crush them underfoot.

"For getting rid of a pest of roaches quickly, the entomologists suggest fumigation by a professional fumigator. But this is an expensive method and if the house is in a congested area where roaches are likely to come back quickly, the expense of fumigation may hardly pay. In most homes, cleanliness and tight construction of the house are the best means of avoiding these pests.

"Starvation is an effective method against clothes moths as well as roaches. The moth which can find no animal substances like wool, hair, fur or feathers to feed upon won't last long under your roof. Clothes that are not in frequent use can be kept free from moths if they are cleaned and put away in moth-proof containers. Dry cleaning kills all moth life. So does washing in a strong solution of neutral soap. And if you then pack the clothes away, even in paper bundles or in cardboard boxes with an unbroken seal, they will be safe. Cold storage is excellent protection against moths. If you happen to have an unheated closet where the temperature in the winter is 50 degrees Fahrenheit or below, clothing, rugs and so on will be safe there. Zero temperatures kill moths in one or two days.

"Clothes in occasional use during the winter or summer can be protected from moths by frequent sunning and brushing. Pay particular attention to all seams, pockets and folds where moths can hide. Moths cannot stand bright sun so that is another moth-remedy that costs nothing. Articles stored in reasonably tight trunks or chests, you can protect by scattering flake naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene between the folds of clothing. As these chemicals are cheap, you'll find that using an overdose will pay. A pound of these flakes is enough for a trunkful of clothes."

That concludes our correspondent's letter of pointers from the entomologists about avoiding moth and cockroach trouble.

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