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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, April 18, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FAKE MOTH PREPARATIONS AND DESTROYERS." Information from the Food and Drug Administration and the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Once again, it's time to talk about our ancient enemy, the clothes moth.

According to our Washington correspondent with the Food and Drug Administration, it's always time to talk about the clothes moth. And judging by the number of requests for the new leaflet on "Moth Control," hundreds and hundreds of households are tormented by the clothes moth -- and other insects. One listener, who wrote for the leaflet on the clothes moth, added a postscript to her letter, saying "All these bugs are enough to worry a person into losing her senses."

Now, down to business. . . . After reading today's report from Washington, I'm inclined to believe we've been using the wrong tactics in our war against the clothes moth. Some of us have been brought up to believe that the mere odor of a moth preparation will drive these insects away. Believe me, they're not so timid as that! Nor are they repelled by printer's ink on newspapers, or by the smell of cedar or pine oil.

But let me quote directly from today's report: "The Food and Drug Administration has charge of enforcing the Federal Insecticide Act, designed to protect consumers against misbranded and adulterated insecticides, fungicides and disinfectants shipped from one State to another.

"Entomologists say that the ravages of house flies, mosquitoes, roaches, ants, and clothes moths can be almost entirely eliminated by the use of effective insecticides, properly employed. However, many householders do not know how to use an insecticide. Many people believe, for instance, that the mere odor of a moth preparation will kill or repel these insects, and it is true that some of the moth preparations on the market claim that this is a fact. Some moth preparations bear grossly misleading claims on their labels; for example, those recommended to be used in an open closet or room. Such misleading claims result in a great loss to the user -- a waste of the money spent for the product, and loss of clothing from moth damage.

"During the past year, the Food and Drug Administration collected and examined 258 preparations for the control of clothes moths, and many of these preparations, particularly the fumigants, were found to be of no value whatsoever when used as directed on the label.

"Dr. W. S. Abbott, entomologist of the Food and Drug Administration, has issued this warning to householders: Before you buy a preparation recommended to be used as a fumigant to prevent moth damage, examine the label and directions critically. Look upon the preparation with suspicion if it claims to be a

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repellent, if it claims to drive out clothes moths, if it does not recommend a definite dosage, and if its use is not restricted to tight containers.

"Doctor Abbott, who has investigated hundreds of preparations and containers recommended to destroy clothes moths, is skeptical of such products as the one put out by a manufacturer who claimed that his 'Chloro-Crystals' would not only control moths, but also improve the health, relieve hay fever, influenza, grip, nasal catarrh, asthma, and colds. The label claimed that the product would purify the air in waiting rooms, smoking rooms, hotels, and fish markets. All of which shows you what far-fetched and ridiculous claims are sometimes made for moth preparations. Incidentally, the manufacturer of these crystals was fined \$100 for violation of the Insecticide Act.

"But referring again to the fumigants, and by the way, the rest of this report comes from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, which works out methods for control of household pests. (The Food and Drug Administration, as you know, enforces the Insecticide Act, which protects consumers against misbranded and adulterated insecticides.) I asked Dr. E. A. Back of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine whether the substance known as para-di-chloro-benzine is of value in controlling clothes moths, and here's his answer:

"Paradichlorobenzene has value in controlling clothes moths if it is used in sufficient quantity, in closets, rooms, trunks, and other containers which are closed tightly enough to prevent escape of the gaseous fumes given off when paradichlorobenzene is exposed to the air.' ('Tightly closed,' to Doctor Back, means that all cracks and crevices are sealed.)

"Remember,' (still quoting Doctor Back), 'that paradichlorobenzene is of no value as a repellent of clothes moths; that is, if placed in an open room, an open closet, or an open box, it will not keep moths from entering, nor will it drive them out if they are already present. However, you may put enough paradichlorobenzene in a tight closet to kill any moths present, provided you keep the closet tightly closed. If you leave the door open, a new family may move in and set up housekeeping.

"Bear in mind that paradichlorobenzene destroys by fumigation, which means that the fumes given off must be confined in a tight container. It is a killer of clothes moths, their eggs, and larvae, when used in tight containers, at a proper dosage.'

"You can see," says our Washington reporter, "how important it is to use enough of this substance. Doctor Back recommends a minimum quantity of one pound to 100 cubic feet of tightly closed space. This amount, one pound, will kill clothes moths in all stages of development, if it's left in the tightly closed space long enough. By the way, one hundred cubic feet is not a very large space. A closet 8 feet high, 4 feet wide, and 3 feet deep contains 96 cubic feet.

"Another fumigant, naphthalene, has an extensive sale for moth control. The comments relative to the use of paradichlorobenzene apply also to the use of naphthalene."

In conclusion, our correspondent reminds us to choose our moth preparations with care, to read the label, and to follow directions. And again I'll call your attention to Leaflet 145, on "Control of the Clothes Moth," available from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.