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Detrick Blamed Again

Ticks Aren't Used In Fever Studies

By JIM SKILLINGTON
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Fort Detrick officials have denied charges that experiments with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever have "any" connection with the recent outbreak of that disease.

An official emphasized that all of their experiments with the disease were in a "completely controlled environment" and were without the use of ticks.

The July 18 issue of Medical World News included an article entitled, "Tick Fever Time, and Not Just in the Rockies," which summarizes the case of a Frederick girl who contracted the disease and claims "Maryland appears to lead the nation" in the spread of the illness from the Rocky Mountain area to the East.

In attempting to answer a question as to why the disease has increased in recent years, the article says: "one jagged question pointed to Ft. Detrick, Center for major Army biological warfare programs, Ft. Detrick experiments with Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever."

Senator Joseph D. Tydings (D-Md) called Friday for a full report on the Detrick experiments.

A spokesman for the base here has conceded that experiments have been made on the illness, but said that the experiments used chicken eggs instead of ticks to produce the fever.

He also said that although the Fort has reported five cases since the experiments started, the most recent infection occurred in 1965.

Dr. Riley D. Housewright, scientific director at Ft. Detrick,

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said last night there was no program there to study ticks or tick fever. He echoed others and said all their work was carried out in completely "sealed test chambers."

He disagreed with the article, saying that the highest concentration of the illness in the East seems to occur along the East coast from Delaware to Florida, including West Virginia.

The disease is not communicable between humans and can be transferred only by "vectors" such as a tick. Although most cases are transferred by the adult tick when it bites a person, the illness can also be transmitted if a tick comes in contact with skin breaks such as a hang nail.

Accordingly, physicians have warned people not to remove ticks with their hands, but instead to use tweezers.

Both dogs and humans can be immunized against the illness. A vaccine is available for humans which can protect them for a season.

However, Dr. Housewright said that only these people who have contact with a tick producing environment, should consider immunization.

Both injections and tablets are available locally for dogs. According to Dr. James E. McClellan, a Frederick Veterinarian, both treatments are called "organic phosphates" and must be repeated about every two weeks. He warned, however, that some dogs including greyhounds can not take the phosphates.

The treatments kill ticks, fleas and some other parasites which suck dog's blood.

Frederick County has reported six cases of spotted fever this year.