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DOG DAYS.

The following is extracted from a letter recently prepared in the Weather Bureau in reply to an inquiry as to the origin and significance of the common custom of referring to certain weather conditions of the summer period as the "dog days."

As this is a subject rarely referred to in meteorological works the letter is reproduced for the information of those who may not have access to the definition of the term.

The term "dog days" belongs to ancient Egyptian astrology. The ancients knew that Sirius, or the Dog Star, rose and set with the sun, or heliacally, during portions of July and August, and assumed that the baleful influence of that star was added to the heat of the sun in those days. But this agreement as to dates varies with every latitude on the earth's surface and with the precession of the equinoxes among the stars. There is therefore no close connection between the duration of the dog days and the dates of our hottest weather. We have our warm, moist, oppressive weather on our Atlantic coast during July to September, whereas it occurs in Australia during January and February. Moreover, our oppressive dog-day weather in New England is quite the opposite to the exhilarating hot, dry weather that occurs at the same time over our western prairie and plateau regions; therefore it is not proper to say "that dog days show up each year at the same time." The dog-day weather of this latitude is simply a combination of the influences of several factors on our bodily comfort. The important factors are southwest to southeast winds, moisture from the ocean, clear sky, hot sunshine. This combination may occur at any time of the year, but is of course most severe when the sun is farthest north of the equator and has unduly heated the atmosphere for a more or less lengthy period.

P. C. D.