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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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DROUGHT AND RAGWEED POLLEN

The recently published results of the 1930 ragweed pollen survey, carried out by O. C. Durham, with the cooperation of the U. S. Weather Bureau, as a contribution to the study of hay fever, show that the crop of ragweed pollen last year was 43 per cent smaller than that of 1929. A large part of the shortage occurred during August and the first week of September; a period corresponding with the pollen-producing season of giant ragweed, which matures about two weeks earlier than short ragweed. It is known that giant ragweed requires much more moisture than short ragweed, and it is natural to assume that the plants of the former were so widely damaged or killed by the great drought as to cause the marked reduction in pollen yield shown by the survey. The daily pollen counts were made at 30 Weather Bureau stations. Last year, for the first time, the survey was extended into Canada, where four stations of the Canadian Meteorological Service cooperated.

"The corn crop," writes Mr. Durham, "may be used as a practical index of the ragweed crop. Ragweed seems to need about the same climatic conditions for development as corn. The corn belt is the ragweed belt. The amount of rainfall in the summer months determines the yield of corn as well as of ragweed. Careful correlations indicate that July rainfall is the most important single factor influencing the ragweed crop."

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