

### County Records Three Undulant Fever Cases

By K. H. SUTHERLAND, M. D., County Health Officer  
Brucellosis, frequently called undulant fever, is primarily an animal disease though it is transmissible to man. No figures on the nationwide occurrence of human brucellosis are available, but the estimate given by public health officials remains around 4,000 to 8,000 new cases each year.

Three cases have been reported in Los Angeles County thus far in 1962, which is two

more than occurred in the same period of the previous year. While the disease is fatal in only about two per cent of cases that occur, it may nevertheless cause a chronic illness that lasts for many years. Cattle, goats, and hogs are the chief reservoirs of the infection, although in recent years studies have shown that the number of animals that harbor the infective organisms is growing.

IN MANY countries, the infection is spread through the consumption of raw unpasteurized milk and other dairy products that are contaminated with brucella bacteria. In the United States and more specifically in Los Angeles County, infection from this source is comparatively rare since approximately 99.7 per cent of the milk products marketed locally are pasteurized.

Brucellosis is therefore chiefly an occupational hazard in this part of the world, and reported cases of the disease are nearly always found among those persons handling infected animals or the meat of such animals. Meat packing and rendering plant employees, butchers, stock handlers, and veterinarians are the types of workers usually infected. Laboratory workers occasionally contract the disease, possibly through inhalation of dried bacteria although

this is not definitely established. IN ADDITION to direct contact with infected animals and the ingestion of raw milk or other dairy products containing brucellae, the disease may also be transmitted by the eating of raw infected meat or by the accidental inoculation that occurs when brucella organisms enter the body through a cut or abrasion on the skin. The incubation period of brucellosis, which is the time that elapses between infection and the first sign of illness, averages between 10 and 30 days but may be longer. Identification is sometimes

difficult for the symptoms of the infection resemble those of other conditions including rheumatic fever, typhoid fever, and influenza. Diagnosis can frequently be confirmed only after repeated laboratory tests. Fever, a generalized aching—particularly in the joints and in the back of the neck and lower back, weakness with pronounced fatigue and exhaustion, weight loss, profuse night sweats, and mental depression are all prominent symptoms of the illness. On the other hand, cases occur in which the discomfort may be so slight that medical attention is considered unnecessary.



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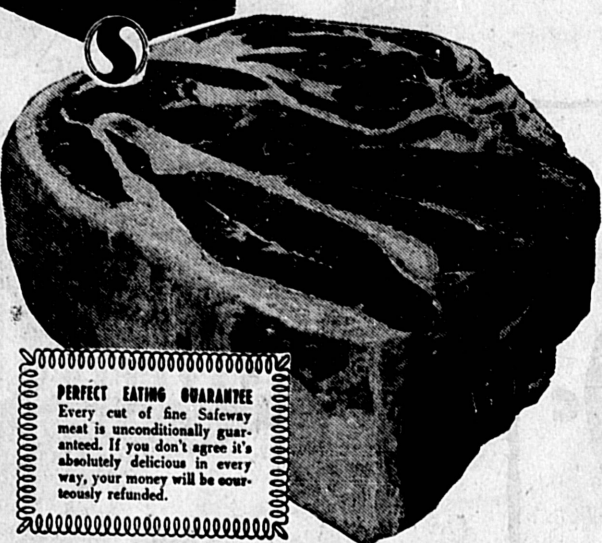
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