

## REPORT OF THE BUREAU OF PLAGUE PREVENTION

### RAT-PROOFING CAMPAIGN, 1925-1926

On the 26th of August, 1925, one special inspector took charge of the rat-proofing work. After considerable study was given to an adequate plan for the development of this new service, a campaign of inspection was carried out which lasted two months. The principal territory covered was the Marina, wharf zone, Tetuán street, Allen street and Puerta de Tierra in the city of San Juan. Four hundred and seventeen inspections were made in 189 buildings and 814 defects found, or an average of nearly 4.31 defects for each building. In making a detailed study of this work it was discovered that the walls of the buildings in the zones inspected presented the largest amount of deficiencies and averaged 26 per cent of the total number. Next in order were the floors and walls which presented an average of 20 per cent; floors that were rat proof, 14 per cent, badly stored merchandise, 10 per cent; lack of cleanliness, 9 per cent; defective roofs, 9 per cent; show cases and counters (from rat proofing standpoint), 3 per cent; other defects of less importance, 7 per cent.

In order to work in close cooperation and harmony with the Bureau of General Inspection it was decided to send a report of the inspections made each week to the District Medical Inspector of San Juan through the chief of the above-named bureau.

Early in November the campaign was suspended principally because the rat-proofing regulation now in force had several defects and consequently amendments will be submitted to the consideration of the Insular Board of Health at an early date.

### DERATIZATION CAMPAIGN

Because of the economic situation due to the reduction of the budget, the deratization campaign which was organized in Mayagüez and Arecibo at the beginning of the year, was suspended on August 22, 1925, and the rat-trapping campaign was limited to San Juan and Santurce. Due to the lack of funds the expenses of the Bureau were cut down again at the end of February. For this reason the number of rats caught is relatively small as compared with last year's ciphers. The total number of rats trapped was 49,347 of which sixty-two were separated as suspicious with negative

results. The following chart shows where the rats were caught, how they were classified, and the number of suspicious rats found in each place:

City	Decumanus	Alexandrinus	Rattus	Mus Musculus	Artomiscobac	Total	Suspicious
San Juan.....	1,407	1,743	2,130	24,795	1	30,076	46
Panurce.....	2,062	2,111	304	13,478	26	19,983	16
Arecibo.....	97	50	25	496	.....	668	.....
Mayagüez.....	224	216	27	152	1	620	.....
Total.....	3,790	4,120	2,486	38,921	30	49,347	62

#### RAT EXAMINATION

As in former years the examination of rats in the laboratory has been carefully made by observing not only the macroscopic lesions of the animals in the autopsy performed, but also by the microscopic examination of the "frottis" from the viscera and lastly by the process of guinea-pig inoculation.

As has already been stated, the number of rats which were separated as suspicious was sixty-two. The main symptoms consisted of sub-cutaneous congestion and in some instances of small abscesses deeply situated under the skin or in the viscera somewhat similar to the lesions of chronic plague. Nevertheless in no case have we been able to prove the presence of the bipolar bacillus, and the guinea-pig inoculation has invariably been negative.

Recently a deratization campaign was carried out at the old Leper Colony of Cabras Island in order to determine whether any leprosy rats existed there. Thus far three rats have been studied which upon examination presented only zones of alopecia, but the autopsy and the microscopic examination did not reveal any signs of leprosy. This study will be continued.

#### COOPERATION

A large number of posters explaining in a concrete and clear way the fundamental principles of the prophylaxis against Bubonic Plague have been placed in important parts of the city throughout the year. Cards have been distributed calling the attention of the public as to the danger of the appearance of dead rats without apparent cause and inviting the public to cooperate with the Department of Health in the work. As a result, five hundred telephone calls have been registered in the office asking for traps. These calls



have been attended to immediately and traps have been supplied without delay.

In July 1925 an article was published in English in the PORTO RICO HEALTH REVIEW entitled "Organization of a Bureau of Plague Prevention in Porto Rico", which aroused considerable interest in the United States and soon after its appearance a letter was received from Miss Isabel K. McDermott, Managing Editor of the *Pan American Bulletin* asking authorization to publish it in the Spanish, English and Portuguese issues of that important magazine.

Miss McDermott's request was readily acceded to and not only a copy of the article was sent in English, but the same article translated especially for this purpose into Spanish was sent. It will appear in the August number of the *Pan American Bulletin*.

From time to time short articles have been sent to the daily papers in an endeavor to keep the public interested in the prevention of Bubonic Plague.

