

THE DISTRIBUTION OF ANTHRAX IN ONTARIO.

Read at the annual meeting of the Association of Executive Officers of Health of Ontario at London, September, 1899.

IN this province we are commencing to realize that Anthrax is not so uncommon a disease as has generally been believed. True, it has only been proven to exist in certain districts, but I am confident that were the matter carefully investigated it would be demonstrated that the present localizations would be found to occupy much too limited an area, and that some at least of those cases of rapidly fatal illness in cattle, looked upon as inflammation, dropsy, etc. (terms which to the scientific investigator mean nothing) would be found to be due to anthrax infection. I do not wish to be pessimistic in this connection, but the disease once seated is so hard to eradicate, and so rapid in its fatality that its occurrence, even sporadically, is a matter for serious consideration by sanitarians, dairymen and stock raisers. From the data already published by the Provincial Board of Health in their annual reports for 1887 and 1891 and '92, together with that collected by the Board this summer, and by myself, we are compelled to recognize the fact that the disease has gained a foothold in certain districts. When we consider the difficulty of its eradication, owing to the tenacity with which its causal agent clings to life and accommodates itself to almost any reasonably suitable environment, we will at the same time see the necessity for rigorous measures to prevent its further spread in the present recognized centres, and the taking of steps to prevent the seeding of other localities either from the infected areas or from those causes which first seeded the centres now infected.

Before considering the outbreaks with which we are acquainted in Ontario, a few general remarks on the nature of anthrax may not be out of the way. Anthrax attacks nearly all stock animals. Sheep, cattle and horses are most subject to attack, sheep being the most susceptible. Hogs, too, are attacked usually from eating the bodies of other animals dead of the disease. Dogs, cats and rats are fairly immune, yet not entirely so. Mice and guinea pigs are very susceptible.

Anthrax is one of the oldest of recognized diseases among cattle and is very widespread. In continental Europe, in India