

A New Lice Diet, Veal and Wool Oil

By JAMES E. ROPER

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WASHINGTON — The Agriculture Department has developed an improved diet for lice that bite.

It's part of a program to control lice which plague poultry and livestock.

To develop control methods, however, Agriculture Department scientists need to raise millions of lice for experiments. Lice in the laboratory normally feed on fresh skins of a natural host such as a goat. In this case, there are too many lice and not enough goats.

So William F. Chamberlain, an entomologist at the U.S. Livestock Insects Laboratory at Kerrville, Tex., developed a lice diet of dehydrated veal covered

with a gravy made from the oil extract of wool.

Chamberlain says the lice "take a few generations" to adapt to this new fare, but then thrive on it.

Entomologists raise their own lice so they will know the precise ages of the insects. The scientists are developing artificial hormones that can disrupt the life cycle of the lice if administered at the correct time. Scientists also are devising procedures for sterilizing male lice, and for applying insecticides at a time the lice are most vulnerable.

The experiments are aimed only at biting lice. Lice that get on humans are sucking lice. Somebody else will have to figure out what to do about them.