

technical difficulties of the subject. The meetings also met with an enthusiastic response from the experimentalists associated with the new nuclear physics laboratory, and both in seminars and outside the lecture rooms there were many occasions when one heard of the fine work done on the Van de Graaff set of the laboratory, and discussed the relations of these results with the theoretical principles that were the main subject of the course.

For the foreign members of the Summer School it was a most stimulating experience to be in Mexico, both because it is always interesting to become acquainted with a new and vigorous research school, and also because they had the chance to see around them so much of beauty and interest. The new University City of Mexico is world-famous for the breath-taking beauty of its buildings and its setting, and there was time enough to see this as a particular example of the achievements of Mexican architecture, which is without comparison in its imaginative use of form and colour, and in the unique way in which it exploits modern building techniques and modern trends, while it remains firmly based on old traditions in art and an impressive sense of continuity of aesthetic values.

For the foreign members there was indeed so much to see outside the Science Institute, and outside Mexico City, that it is a tribute to the programme of the Summer School and to the sense of duty of its members that sight-seeing trips and archaeological excursions were normally confined to week-ends or postponed until after the end of the course.

In principle, one might argue that summer schools should not be held in places so attractive as Mexico, and which offer so many alternative interests, or that they should not be held at the sponsoring University, where the local staff have their normal business to attend to. But in this case there was no sign that either of these factors was allowed to divert attention from the activities of the School.

A similar Summer School for 1957 is now under discussion and the subject is likely to be experimental nuclear physics. If the University of Mexico, and the members of the physics staff in particular, are willing to continue to carry the burden involved in the organization of a summer school, and of the generous and friendly hospitality which was provided, the School will undoubtedly establish itself as an important feature in modern physics, which can provide another forum for serious discussion and a focus for the interests of physicists in Latin America.

R. E. PETERLS

MYXOMATOSIS IN AUSTRALIA

ON September 18 the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization of Australia held a conference in Melbourne to plan the country's myxomatosis campaign for the season.

The conference included representatives of the Organization, the State Departments of Agriculture and of Lands, the Commonwealth Department of Commerce and Agriculture, the Graziers' Federal Council, the Australian Wool and Meat Producers' Federation, the Australian Primary Producers' Union, Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute for Medical Research, and the Australian National University. Sir Ian Clunies Ross was chairman.

Reports from all the Australian States indicated that rabbit populations are extremely low. Myxomatosis has been largely responsible for the reduction in rabbit numbers, but other factors have also contributed; the widespread and organized use of the poison '1080' has been particularly important in Tasmania and Western Australia. Climatic conditions, too, and especially very heavy rainfall, have adversely affected rabbit breeding.

In Tasmania poisoning with '1080' has been most successful. Rabbit numbers have been reduced to an extent which compares favourably with results achieved by myxomatosis in the eastern States.

Prof. F. Fenner, of the Australian National University, reported on his examination of more than 150 strains of myxomatosis virus, including strains from Europe and America.

In Australia, strains of the virus with reduced virulence appeared in the field soon after the initial release of myxomatosis in 1950. These less-virulent strains have become dominant.

In Europe the less-virulent strains did not appear as rapidly but they are now the dominant strains there also.

The conference recommended that further large-scale inoculations with the standard (high-virulence) strain of the virus should be carried out during the coming season to prolong the period of effective use of myxomatosis by allowing fewer rabbits to survive and breed.

If existing low-virulent field strains are allowed to develop without some competition from the standard strain of the disease there will be a much bigger reservoir of survivors to provide genetically resistant progeny.

A high incidence of myxomatosis in the coming spring and summer is predicted. To take maximum advantage of these favourable conditions, a campaign for the general release of the standard (high virulence) strain of the virus has just begun.

Experiments aimed at introducing the 'French' strain of the virus indicated that it did not survive in competition with the existing dominant field strain of low virulence. A warning was given against further introduction of the 'French' strain. It appears that this strain has given rise to much less virulent forms of the virus.

Experiments undertaken by Dr. I. D. Marshall, of the Australian National University, and Dr. W. R. Sobey, of the C.S.I.R.O. Animal Genetics Section, have confirmed that rabbits can inherit some degree of resistance to myxomatosis. Observations in the field have indicated that rabbits are, in fact, inheriting resistance to the disease, but further investigations will be necessary before the degree of this inheritance can be assessed.

The conference was told that it was believed that the European rabbit flea was a major factor in the spread of myxomatosis in the United Kingdom. The Australian Agricultural Council agreed at its meeting in July 1956 to a recommendation that the European rabbit flea be used for myxomatosis experiments in Australia. The conference agreed that such experiments would be valuable, subject to tests to confirm that the flea is harmless to Australian fauna.

The conference urged all landholders to use poison '1080' and all other effective methods after the current myxomatosis season ends. Advantage should be taken of low rabbit numbers to kill off all survivors. The aim must be to eradicate the rabbit from Australia.