

Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever Incidence

Until 1931 more than 99 percent of all cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever reported in the United States occurred in the Mountain and Pacific States where the disease had been known as early as 1873. Prior to 1931 only a few scattered cases had been reported in the North Central States. An investigation of endemic typhus fever in eastern United States, begun in 1930, established the existence of Rocky Mountain spotted fever in the southeastern part of the country. Cases were reported for the first time in the South Atlantic and East South Central States in 1931.

The proportion of reported cases by geographic areas in each 5-year period, beginning with 1930-34 and ending with 1950-54, is shown in the accompanying chart. During this 25-year period, there was a marked reduction in percentage of cases occurring in the Mountain and Pacific States and an increasing proportion in other parts of the country, particularly in the South Atlantic States.

Attack rates per 100,000 population for the various areas by 5-year periods indicate that the peak in incidence of reported cases was reached in the Mountain and Pacific States in the 1930-34 period. Since then, the rate has declined about 80

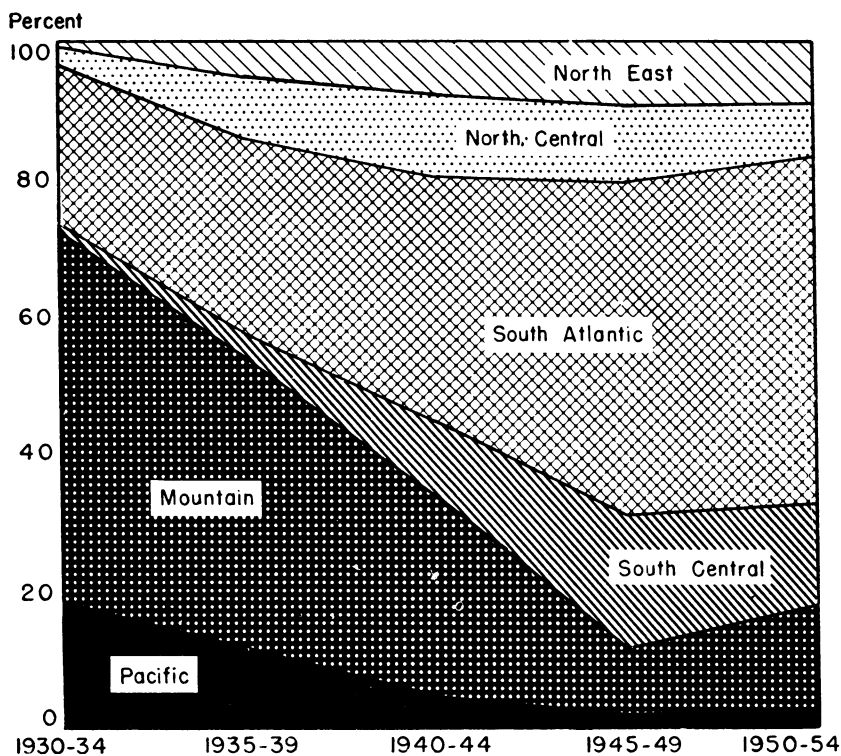
percent. To what extent vaccination, commenced in 1925 on an experimental basis, has been effective in reducing incidence in these areas is not known.

Since 1930 the disease has been reported in all but two States, Maine and Vermont. Only a few scattered cases have been reported in the remaining New England States. In the western part of the country, incidence rates, based on reported cases, have been highest in Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and Oregon,

in the order named. In eastern United States, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina have experienced the highest rates. However, rates in these States have been lower than in the western States noted above.

Prior to the advent of antibiotic treatment of Rocky Mountain spotted fever, the fatality rate for the country as a whole averaged about 18 percent. With extensive use of these therapeutic agents, which began in about 1949, the fatality rate dropped to about 6 or 7 percent.

Proportion of cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever reported by geographic areas, 1930-54.



Prepared by the National Office of Vital Statistics, Public Health Service.