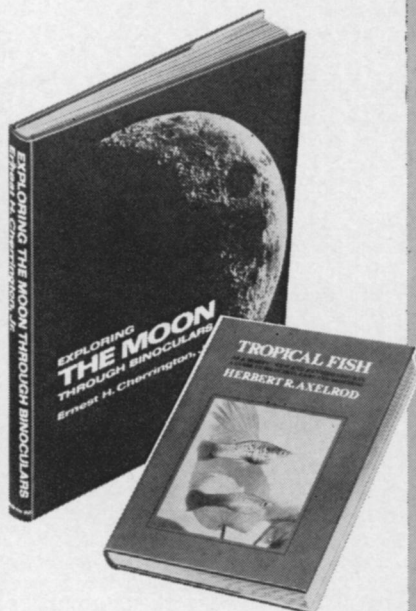


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LETTERS

to the editor

No catnip kick

My wife and I, both engineers, have for years been avid readers of Science News. Please forgive us for waiting so long to commend you on its excellence.

We were particularly intrigued by the item (SN: 3/8, p. 238) concerning the alleged hallucinogenic properties of *Nepeta cataria*. The prospect seems hardly unreasonable to anyone who has ever observed a flying feline (smashed Siamese?). Anyway, the spirit of detached scientific curiosity immediately got the better of me, and I dispatched my wife to the local pet shop to make the connection. Either we are faced with another hoax of the Banana genre, or Drs. Jackson and Reed have access to a more potent strain of catnip than plain old Hartz Mountain. In an effort to give a fair trial, I smoked, with considerable effort, two mammoth bowlfuls—experiencing, sad to say, nothing beyond sore throat and mild oxygen starvation.

We will anxiously be scanning the pages of future issues of SCIENCE NEWS for further words on this phenomenon. No doubt we are not alone in awaiting the discovery of forbidden pleasures to be garnered from some common substance, as difficult as catnip for the authorities to proscribe.

John Ricci
Willimantic, Conn.

In re: the note entitled "Catnip" (SN: 3/8, p. 238).

As one studying in the field of mental hygiene and psychotherapy, and working with several leading psychiatrists, I was naturally intrigued that the effect produced by those known to have smoked catnip is somewhat similar to LSD.

However, when the time came to evaluate this announcement by testing it out upon a controlled subject in the lab, nothing happened. Tests were re-

peatedly conducted (following the rough outline in the article), but outside of a bad taste in the subject's mouth, nothing at all was found to be out of the ordinary. In short, the subject felt no difference nor experienced anything beyond what he normally felt at all times. As I said, repeated tests were made at least half a dozen times.

C. H. Beck
North Bergen, N.J.

I.Q. or intelligence

Just a short note concerning, what appears to me, an unfortunate interpretation of the I.Q. score in your recent article, "Nurture Key to I.Q." (SN: 3/9, p. 243). I am sure that neither Dr. Hunt nor Patricia McBroom meant to equate directly the I.Q. score with intelligence. This can be very misleading. I.Q. scores are just that . . . Scores. Intelligence, on the other hand, is a conceptual term for a very vague and elusive phenomenon unless you apply an operational definition to the concept which simply leads to circularity, i.e., intelligence is what intelligence tests measure.

Yes we can raise I.Q. scores! We can do it in a number of ways. We can increase our educational inputs to our population (since tests appear to reflect levels of education) or we can change our testing procedures (i.e., make our tests easier) or we can train people to answer questions they might get on I.Q. tests . . . etc., etc. In other words, we can call higher I.Q. scores on tests higher intelligence. But whether "real" intelligence has or can be changed remains a moot point.

By the way, I have enjoyed SCIENCE NEWS throughout the years as a most informative journal.

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