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Letters

Experimental detachment

In "Dynorphin aids stroke-stricken cats" (SN: 12/15/84, p. 375), the cats in question were not stricken by naturally occurring "strokes" but by human-induced injuries. Your choice of title is a small but telling example of a pervasive detachment from reality that afflicts humans dealing with animal experimentation.

Loretta Hirsh
Washington, D.C.

DES and homosexuality?

It appears that diethylstilbestrol (DES) can reach and affect the children being carried by mothers receiving this drug as treatment for preventing miscarriage (SN: 12/1/84, p. 341). If this is true, then could DES and similar drugs increase the likelihood of homosexual behavior in a child who was carried while the mother was taking these drugs? This possibility seems to agree with Weinrich and Pillard's theory as reported in "Hormone markers for homosexual-

This Week

- 36 The Great AIDS Race: Testing the Test
- 37 Signs of a puzzling ring around Neptune
- 37 Quasicrystals: A new ordered structure
- 37 West Coast shuttle delay
- 38 Teen drug use—except cocaine—falls
- 38 Antidote for a heart stopper
- 38 Aspirin and Reye's: Industry responds
- 39 Star Wars defense: Is it legal?
- 39 Reagan names 3 for cabinet vacancies
- 40 Solar system search from space station
- 40 Survival: Sizing up the sexes
- 40 Planet X and the killer comets

Research Notes

- 41 Biology

Articles

- 42 Halos of Stone
Cover: These circles of stone, discovered in the partially frozen ground in Spitsbergen, an island near the Arctic, are one kind of naturally occurring mosaic called patterned ground. The origin of these circles, polygons and other forms found worldwide in earth and rock has long stumped scientists. (Photo by Bernard Hallet)
- 45 Catching Some Zs

Departments

- 34 Books
- 35 Letters

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ity?" (SN: 9/29/84, p. 198) since estrogen might prevent the "defeminization" of the brain.

Shawn Burke
Gainesville, Ga.

On behalf of baking soda

Regarding your article, "Hold the NaCHO₃s" (SN: 12/8/84, p. 360), the history of the usage of bicarbonate as an antacid is clearly very positive. Furthermore, the question is quite open as to whether bicarbonate has ever been the causative agent of stomach rupture, despite the paper of Mastrangelo and Moore, where bicarbonate was said to have been ingested prior to the rupture. Appearing in the same month as that paper was work by Fordtran, Morawski, Santa Ana and Rector (GASTROENTEROLOGY, 1984: 87: 1014-21) in which they showed that the recommended dosage of bicarbonate in vitro, under conditions that conservatively model a fully loaded stomach, generates so little carbon dioxide as a function of time as to be less a threat to significant volume increase of the

stomach than the water with which it was taken.

Whatever the event that is the instant cause of a rupture, it seems that overindulgence in food or drink or both, to the point of taxing the mechanical strength of the stomach wall, is the common precursor. At that point, vomiting, retching, gastric dilatation or adding the next increment of material to the stomach can precipitate rupture. Instead of saying, "Stay away from sodium bicarbonate on a full stomach," Mastrangelo and Moore should have said, "Stay away from ingesting anything."

James L. Rogula
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Piscataway, N.J.

Correction: In "Rock-a-bye nutrients" (SN: 12/8/84, p. 360), the infants in the experiment were given a single modified feeding, not every other night for several weeks. Ten, not 20, newborns were given the modified feeding.