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Letters

A plea to AIDS researchers

Your article "AIDS research, virus both advance" (SN: 1/5/85, p. 7) prompts this plea: that researchers not play the diligent scientist and withhold ribavirin from any AIDS patient for the sake of caution or the statistical control of a double-blind test. The disease is lethal, the drug is known to be quite safe, and a large group of survivors could perhaps supply antibodies for a stopgap passive-immunity serum until an active vaccine can be developed. It is not, as stated, "a long way from a cell culture to a human body." Surely any AIDS-afflicted human body would gladly oblige by standing right next to any cell culture if this would make it easier for the medical person to administer the drug.

The so-called "risk factors" are primarily a phenomenon of group sharing, not a group susceptibility nor a group divine punishment. The disease will disperse until being human will be a risk factor. I, for one, would excuse, even

This Week

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Cover: Flowers of scarlet gilia shift from dark to light to cater to the color preferences of a changing population of pollinators. Here, a plant with both pink and white blooms is ready for the transition from hummingbird to hawkmoth pollinators. (Photo: Paige & Whitham)
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Thoughts on the unthinkable

"More support for nuclear winter theory" (SN: 12/22 & 29/84, p. 397) left me thoughtful:

*Do the lemmings, I wonder,
on their way to the sea,*

*Dispute upon the process of drowning
and the sea's salinity?*

Perhaps if the National Academy of Sciences were less fascinated by "the process of drowning" and more with the process of living, it would be urging the study of ways to prevent a nuclear winter in the same spirit of goodwill with which it now seeks to understand the unthinkable.

Michael L. Wright
Tallahassee, Fla.

Correction: In the article "Catching Some Zs" (SN: 1/19/85) a misprint in the ninth line from the bottom of the middle column put "neutrons" for "neutrinos." The correct sentence should read: "(Muons, electrons and neutrinos are not hadrons.) In the same column, "U₂₃₅" should read "uranium."

applaud, a lapse in scientific meticulousness if it could postpone the day when my humanness becomes a risk factor.

Mark Rath
Hyde Park, N.Y.

On jumpers and thumpers

When the California researchers said of frog seismic signaling ("Frog talk: Chirp, chuckle and thump," SN: 1/12/85, p. 21), "[This] provides the first strong implication of the use of substrate-borne seismic signals in intraspecific communication in vertebrates," I suppose they had forgotten about bunnies. Every schoolchild knows of "Thumper."

Marvin E. Kahn
Germantown, Md.

In the case of Thumper and other ground-thumping mammals, biologists think that it is the thump's airborne sound, rather than the ground-borne seismic waves, that carries the signal from one animal to another. — J.A. Miller

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