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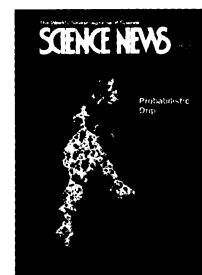
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Cover: Mathematicians are experimenting with mathematical models that consist of simple rules governing the way in which one cell on a checkerboard grid interacts with its neighbors. Sometimes the models seem to mimic natural phenomena such as the spread of a forest fire or an epidemic, the propagation of plant species, or the trickle of oil through sand (as shown). In the case of oil in sand, whether flow is established depends on the probability of transmission from one cell to another. The illustration superimposes the percolation patterns for three different probabilities. (Image: R. Durrett)



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Letters

Patent the process, not the progeny

There is no great moral/ethical dilemma in patenting animals ("Animal Patent Debate Heats Up," SN: 8/1/87, p.69) if the patent is limited to the *process* by which a new animal is created genetically; but when that animal goes ahead and reproduces itself, its children belong not to the patent holder but to the animal's owner.

After all, just because Xerox Corp. has a patent on its copying machine, it does not thereby own all of the outputs of those machines.

W. Morrow
Denver, Colo.

Baby knows best

Researchers from the University of Maryland find it "curious" that 37-hour-old breast-

fed babies had a more difficult time completing a series of tests than did bottle-fed infants ("Irritable rule for breast-fed babies," SN: 8/8/87, p.94).

One doesn't need a scientific study to conclude why breast-fed babies are so "irritable." These hours-old infants have already experienced the warmth and security of mom's body and the nearness of the breast for satisfying their hunger and sucking needs. Furthermore, they have experienced all this at a time when they are most impressionable. These "fussy" babies *know* what they want — and it's *not* the researchers!

Mary Witucki
Easton, Pa.

'Mind-crushing tests'

"IQ's Generation Gap" (SN: 8/15/87, p.108) presented some stimulating information. Your readers may also be interested to know

that the Triple Nine Society and the International Society for Philosophical Enquiry both conduct psychometric research with the goal of developing accurate and culturally unbiased IQ tests. This is an elusive pursuit and, in fact, one of the Triple Nine Society researchers maintains that the popular standard IQ tests do not accurately measure IQ above the "gifted" threshold of 130.

He has already developed and administered mind-crushing tests for the gifted that few people dare to try. His results seem to indicate that mere speed of thought alone only allows test takers to race through the trivia but does not guarantee results when the questions are deep and difficult.

It may be that, if IQ tests are still used in the future, they may be radically different from the ones commonly used by psychologists today.

Eugene H. Primoff
Roxbury, N.Y.

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