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## Letters

### Estrogen from ill-treated mares?

As a 36-year-old who has undergone surgical menopause and has a family history of Alzheimer's, I was especially interested in "Forever Smart" (SN: 2/4/95, p.74).

The article noted that the most popular estrogen replacement product, Premarin, is derived from the urine of pregnant horses. I took Premarin for a year after my surgery until I read about the appalling conditions to which mares are subjected in order to derive the estrogen.

At pregnant mare urine farms, mares are impregnated, confined to small stalls, catheterized, and given one-third to one-half of normal daily water (in order to concentrate the estrogen in their urine) for 6 months. Shortly after birth, their foals are removed and sold for slaughter. This growing industry is largely unregulated, and according to eyewitness testimony, conditions for the horses are horrific.

Those who find this disturbing may be relieved to learn that there are several excellent estrogen replacement options made from plant derivatives. These include both oral tablets and transdermal patches. I have been using the latter for the past year and am thoroughly satisfied with them.

Carol Bibler  
Grand Junction, Colo.

### A Pyrrhic catch

In the late 1960s, my father, Lewis Doering, was deputy director of economic development for the state of Maine. He described to me the curious results of a state-sponsored experiment, which should interest readers of "Tracking an Undersea Scent" (SN: 2/6/95, p.78).

With the volume of the lobster catch declining, fishermen were seeking cheaper and more efficacious alternatives to the rotted redfish carcasses traditionally used as bait in the large, cratelike traps. After extensive testing, however, none of the plausible substitutes showed any advantage. Speculating that the

lobsters were attracted by the oily plume emanating from the decaying fish, someone suggested a final test with a kerosene-soaked brick as bait.

The results were spectacular: The test trap was hauled and found to be crammed to capacity with lobsters—all dead.

Paula F. Doering  
Rochester, N.Y.

### Antimicrobial kisses?

Defensin, the natural antibiotic of the mouth discovered by Zasloff ("Defending us from our dirty mouths," SN: 3/18/95, p.166) offers an explanation for the adage, "Let Mama kiss it and make it well."

Barlow Soper  
Ruston, La.

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