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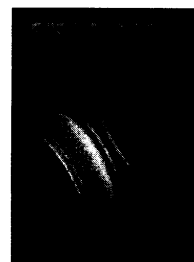
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Cover: Chemists are learning to use lasers to control chemical reactions. In this computer-generated model, colored concentric shells represent energy levels of an excited hydrogen atom. (Image: Jeffrey L. Krause, Bonnie B. Stark, Kent R. Wilson)



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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Programs it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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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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