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Cover: Could acoustic devices designed to determine the effect of greenhouse gases on ocean temperature harm this humpback whale or other marine animals? Researchers disagree on the answer, but the debate has focused attention on undersea noise pollution. (Photo: Kim Heacox/Tony Stone Images)



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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

Pectin's potential

If pectin is "just a dietary fiber," why is it that it kills trichonae as well as at least some of the tropical infestations that cause traveler's diarrhea ("Jamming prostate cancer's transmission," SN: 3/4/95, p.134)?

Maybe the Wayne State team could make a more immediate contribution to health problems if they simply studied the beneficial effects of unmodified pectin. And it doesn't need to be bought in health food stores: Apples and potatoes are both rich sources.

N.P. Danforth
Fountain Hills, Ariz.

Another cause of SIDS

Another cause of sudden infant death syndrome ("Infants' deaths become less mysterious," SN: 3/11/95, p.151) was documented by Australia's Viera Scheibner and Leif Karlsson

while developing "Cotwatch," a monitoring device that sets off an alarm whenever a baby's breathing becomes shallow, a sign of nonspecific stress syndrome. It soon became apparent that alarms were routinely triggered after the babies had been inoculated with the DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus) vaccine.

Scheibner and Karlsson presented these results at the Second Immunization Conference in Canberra in 1991.

Their work confirmed earlier observations by Archie Kalokerinos and Glenn Dettman that outbreaks of SIDS commonly occurred among aboriginal children following inoculations.

Janet James
Dalton, N.Y.

Blood banks back further tests

"Debugging Blood" (SN: 2/11/95, p.92) refers to some promising data from clinical trials evaluating a new test that can detect HIV antigen and shorten the period of time

between when a person becomes infected with HIV and when the infection is detectable with currently available screening tests.

Although the number of transfusion-transmitted cases during this period is very low, continuing concern over HIV transmission warrants the adoption of such a test as soon as one appropriate for use in a blood bank setting becomes available. To permit the implementation of HIV antigen testing as soon as possible after licensure, the American Association of Blood Banks' board of directors has assigned its committees the responsibility for making recommendations concerning policies, procedures, and materials that must be developed prior to test implementation, including recommendations to blood banks on donor and inventory management.

Karen Shoos Lipton
Chief Executive Officer
American Association of Blood Banks
Bethesda, Md.