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Cover: Methods of seeing inside objects using X rays, sound waves, or magnetic resonance have grown familiar in recent years. Now, scientists are developing a way to image the molecular makeup of materials with terahertz waves, or T rays. (Image: B.B. Hu, M.C. Nuss/AT&T Bell Laboratories.)

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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

Does DES affect behavior?

Several recent animal and human studies point to sexual abnormalities of form and function in males as a result of their intra-uterine exposure to feminizing insecticides and the anti-nausea drug diethylstilbestrol ("DES Sons Face No Fertility Problems." SN: 5/27/95, p.323).

The question must be asked whether those exposures may also affect behavior—namely, homosexuality. The cohort exposed to DES would be a good place to start a study.

Theodore A. Dippy
Astatula, Fla.

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All letters subject to editing.

Antibiotic amber?

If Cano and Borucki seek useful antibiotics from ancient bacteria spores ("Ancient Bacteria Brought Back to Life." SN: 5/20/95, p.308), I suggest they examine the amber encasement as well as the insects and spores contained by it.

As a beekeeper, I know that propolis, a substance created by bees, contains natural antibiotics. Bees use propolis to seal off dead mice and other creatures they cannot remove from their hive. This strategy effectively isolates these potential disease sources from the bee population.

Amber is fossilized tree and plant resin. Propolis is made from the same materials, especially Poplar resin. It may well be that amber preserves its contents by more means than merely acting as a moisture barrier. It may, like propolis, have antibiotic properties of its own.

Bill Sturgeon
Petrolia, Calif.

Straightening out Ebola risk

I am shocked that you could print without comment the fatuous statement from WHO that "it is highly unlikely that [people sick enough from Ebola to be contagious] would try to travel on an international flight and unlikely that they would be permitted on board if they did try" ("Ebola cases on the rise in Zaire," SN: 5/27/95, p.333). The statement may be true, but it's irrelevant.

The concern is not that a dying passenger will transmit the disease in flight. The real worry is that an infected but symptomless person could fly to some big city outside of Zaire and then sicken and infect others.

Richard B. Crawford
Napa, Calif.

CORRECTION

"Of Whales and Ocean Warming" (SN: 6/3/95, p.350) incorrectly states that sound travels more slowly through warm water. It actually travels faster.