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Letters

'Enough' grain depends on use

The world's population can satisfy its hunger quite well with either a grain-based or a meat-based diet ("Can Grain Yields Keep Pace?" SN: 8/16/97, p. 104). Thus every individual has a choice: meat or grain.

But what of the collective? The process of turning grain crops into meat is grossly inefficient. If we, collectively, were to choose to eat grain—as bread, pasta, and so on—instead of feeding it to cattle, we could, in theory, feed many times our current world population with today's harvests.

CORRECTION

In "A Silent Cool" (SN: 9/6/97, p. 152), Cronin B. Vining is described as president of the International Thermolectric Society. Vining is the former president; D.M. Rowe is the current president.

The collective health benefits of such a choice would be equally dramatic.

*Bill Sturgeon
Petrolia, Calif.*

Countering cholera

Rita Colwell states that "remote sensing may help researchers provide early warnings of when and where cholera will strike. Such warnings may encourage people to take extra precautions with their drinking water" (SN: 8/2/97, p. 72). This implies that cholera epidemics are primarily due to misinformation of some sort on the part of sufferers and that the information provided by remote sensing would significantly help these people to avoid the disease.

Cholera is essentially a disease of poverty. It is caused not by lack of information but by horrible living conditions and polluted water. I hardly think that telling poverty-stricken people they should "take extra precautions with their drinking water" is very

meaningful when they are forced to live in hovels and get their water from polluted sources. In fact, doing so would be an insult to their intelligence!

*John Jaros
Lynbrook, N.Y.*

Cholera is indeed a disease born of poverty. Yet this poverty will not be eliminated in the near future, and Colwell believes that warnings of cholera outbreaks can be useful immediately. For example, she and her colleagues have shown that people can significantly lower the risk of cholera infection if they filter water through a folded sari, a traditional garment worn by millions of women. —J. Travis

How much steroid is too much?

As an occasional user of inhaled steroids for asthma, I was concerned about the article linking them to cataracts ("Inhaled steroids

Letters continued on p. 235