

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

Volume 156, No. 24, December 11, 1999

This Week

- 372 New Drug Thwarts a Chronic Leukemia
Nathan Seppa
- 372 Minds may track danger unconsciously
Bruce Bower
- 373 Polar Lander's silence deals NASA a setback
Ron Cowen
- 373 Simplicity makes for superfast computing
Ivars Peterson
- 374 Buoy oh buoy: Comprehensive El Niño data
Oliver Baker
- 374 Laboratory-grown corneas come into sight
John Travis
- 375 Fighting salmon fly dark flag to surrender
Susan Milius
- 375 Better butter? This one may fight cancer
Janet Raloff

Articles

- 378 Animal Whodunit, Medical Mystery
Scientists cross species barriers to
diagnose West Nile encephalitis
Susan Milius

Letters

The answer is no

The headline "Fertilizer: Hiding a toxic pollutant?" (SN: 10/16/99, p. 245) was far more inflammatory than your actual article. There is no credible scientific evidence of perchlorate in fertilizers other than Chilean nitrate, a fact that has been known for 20 years. The fertilizer industry is working with federal agencies to reach scientific agreement on the issue. We believe current scientific evidence is not reliable and that a cooperatively developed sampling and analysis protocol will prove that U.S. fertilizer products are not generic carriers of perchlorate. Until such a program proves otherwise, the answer to the question in your headline is a resounding no.

*Ron Phillips
The Fertilizer Institute
Washington, D.C.*

Which way's up?

In "The strangest home on Earth" (SN: 10/2/99, p. 216), your reference to "the eastern portion of Antarctica" seems strange because when I look at the map, I see just northern and central Antarctica. It also

seems strange to speak of "the remote Vostok site," giving the implication that the station run by the United States at the South Pole is therefore less remote.

*Jim Wilson
Fairfield, Calif.*

The Antarctic continent is usually subdivided into East and West Antarctica, with the Transantarctic Mountains marking the division. Most of East Antarctica falls in the Eastern Hemisphere of the globe. Although Vostok and South Pole stations both lie far from the coast, Vostok is serviced mainly by a once-yearly convoy of tractors that must make a 2-week overland trip. The South Pole station, by contrast, is supported by regular flights from the U.S. McMurdo Base. —R. Monastersky

Oil all over

"Nighttime hormone helps starve cancers" (SN: 10/2/99, p. 221) stated that linoleic acid, the primary fat in corn oil, can fuel the growth of cancer in animals. How many readers are going to throw away their corn oil in favor of some other cooking oil without realizing that linoleic acid is also the primary fat in sunflower, safflower, soy, peanut, cotton-

seed, and walnut oil? You do a disservice to your readers when you present such chilling information in an incomplete and misleading manner.

*Phyllis Eisenstein
Chicago, Ill.*

Who came for dinner?

Researchers are bewildered why Neanderthals would lovingly bury the dead and yet eat other Neanderthals ("Cave finds revive Neanderthal cannibalism," SN: 10/2/99, p. 213). What's so bewildering? Isn't it likely that those buried with care were close kin and those eaten were members of rival clans? We've seen parallels among indigenous *Homo sapien* tribes, even in this century.

*Wayne Blizzard
Escondido, Calif.*

What evidence is there to suggest who did the feasting? Them or us?

*Bud E. Lewis
Jackson, Calif.*

It's not clear who feasted. Neither is it clear that there was a distinct difference between "them" and "us."

—B. Bower

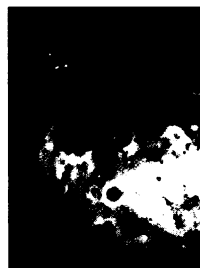
- 382 Close Encounter: Galileo Eyes Io
Craft records a hot time on a Jovian moon
Ron Cowen

Research Notes

- 377 Archaeology
Bronze Age origin for Seahenge
Golden Gate gets older date
- 377 Astronomy
Elliptical orbits may be planetary norm
Reflected light from an alien world?
- 381 Behavior
Suicidal link for gun owners
Pathways of sound
- 381 Biomedicine
Compound reverses diabetes damage
Pregnancy poses risk for mutation carriers

Departments

- 370 Books
- 371 Letters



Cover: On Oct. 10, the Galileo spacecraft braved bombardment from Jupiter's intense radiation belts to fly within 611 kilometers of Io, capturing new views of three of this Jovian moon's many active volcanoes. **Page 382** (Images in composite: NASA/JPL)

Visit SCIENCE NEWS ONLINE for special features, columns, and references.

<http://www.sciencenews.org>