

Questions

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BIOLOGY

Sees Sex Ratio Control Through Blood Acidity

➤ A PRACTICAL WAY of getting more boy than girl babies, or at least more male than female cattle, could come through testing and if necessary changing the acidity of the blood of the sire, Dr. K. G. McWhirter of Oxford University suggests in *Nature* (Oct. 20).

It depends on a previous report that in mice the males with somewhat acid blood had an excess of females in their offspring, while those with somewhat more alkaline blood had an excess of males in their offspring.

Mammals other than mice may also produce more males or more females according to the acidity or alkalinity of the blood of the male parents, it appears from other studies.

"Athletic men" have a tendency to produce more daughters, one report has shown, and athletic exertion reduces blood alkalinity, at least temporarily. Diet and high altitude have also been shown to be factors affecting blood acidity or alkalinity.

From all these points, Dr. McWhirter concludes that "a practical system of controlling sex ratio in economically important animals might be set up."

He suggests doing this by selecting sires for the appropriate acid or alkaline blood tendency or by altering the blood in the desired direction by drugs, diet or an artificial atmosphere of the desired oxygen level.

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