Letters

Ectromelia in U.S. Mouse Colonies

In January 1974 a laboratory at the National Institutes of Health received a small number of tumor-bearing mice from a European research institution. Soon after arrival the mice began to die and were found to have the acute form of ectromelia (mousepox). Immediate quarantine and decontamination procedures limited the outbreak to the original group of tumor-bearing imported mice and animals receiving new transplants. Fortunately none of the mice were removed from the room before or after the disease was discovered.

It has also been confirmed that ectromelia occurred in a midwestern research institution in February 1974. In both cases the source of infection appeared to be unvaccinated mice imported from Europe. Ectromelia is a highly infectious virus disease of mice. Other species of animals, including man, are not affected by the virus. This disease, which is endemic in many areas of the world, rarely occurs in U.S. mouse colonies. When introduced, however, mortality rates are generally high.

To reduce the possibility of further introduction of mousepox into this country it is suggested that all imported mice, mouse blood, and other mouse tissue products from foreign countries be accompanied by a certificate signed by a veterinarian and stating that the mice have been vaccinated at an age greater than 21 days with IHD-T strain of vaccinia virus, that a primary "take" was observed, and that the mice were derived from breeder stock that has been vaccinated for at least two generations. Tumor transplants of mouse origin should be passed at least twice through vaccinated mice to be acceptable for receipt in the United States. Unvaccinated animals received from other U.S. laboratories as well as foreign sources should be quarantined in an isolated area and tested for ectromelia before their introduction into existing colonies. This would include all mice that did not originate from clean, "closed" institutional or commercial colonies. It is also suggested that U.S. mice be vaccinated for ectromelia before shipment to foreign laboratories to protect those highly susceptible animals from this disease.

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Scientific Aid to Indochina

I am extremely gratified that Solang Uk (Letters, 8 Feb., p. 469) is so supportive of our task force Scientific Aid to Indochina. However, the statement made in the letter—that North Vietnam alone is to benefit from the aid—is not in accord with our principles or practices.

We have from the beginning realized that all of the people in Indochina have suffered greatly from the war, and need and deserve the help of U.S. scientists. We are currently establishing contacts with scientists in South Vietnam, and are sending books and journals of use to them. Anyone who knows of scientists in any area of Indochina who might be interested in cooperating with us in this venture should contact us immediately.

Our first large project was to help the people in North Vietnam establish a Research Institute of Agricultural Botany, for it was there that we made the first contacts and the first visit. This was—and is—an urgently needed program. It is not, however, exclusive of other projects in other areas of Indochina. Persons with ideas are urged to send them to us.

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NAS Research Associates

In a report on the "Pentagon's R & D clients" (News and Comment, 8 Mar., p. 936), Nicholas Wade writes that the "academy's work . . . [at Aberdeen Proving Ground and Picatinny Arsenal] consists of the employment of a handful of postgraduate students who work at nuclear investigations at Aberdeen and 'general physics,' including explosive materials, at Dover."

The fact is that the National Academy of Sciences administers programs of postdoctoral research associateships for 14 federal research organizations, of which eight are supported by the Department of Defense—including those at Picatinny and Aberdeen. Some of these research associates receive temporary civil service appointments from the host agencies, while others receive grants from the NAS and enjoy the status of guest investigators at the laboratories. None of them is an employee of the NAS and none of them is doing the work of the NAS. Furthermore, the work they are doing, largely of their own choice, is entirely unclassified and all are encouraged to publish.

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Library Photocopying

In his article "Soaring prices and sinking sales of science monographs" (25 Jan., p. 282) Curtis G. Benjamin describes the economic dilemma faced by the publishers of science monographs. He makes a number of observations about the reasons for declining sales of these important publications.

Benjamin states that the most important reason in recent years for the continuing annual drop in sales is the "employment of the so-called new technology and of new circulation practices of research and special libraries." He cites photocopying for interlibrary loans as contributing to the problem of reduced sales of science monographs. As the principal investigator of a recent national study on the interlibrary loan activities of academic libraries (*1*), I would like to offer some data on this aspect of the problem.

From a national probability sample of academic libraries, we estimated that a total of 1,940,000 loan requests were