# Briefings

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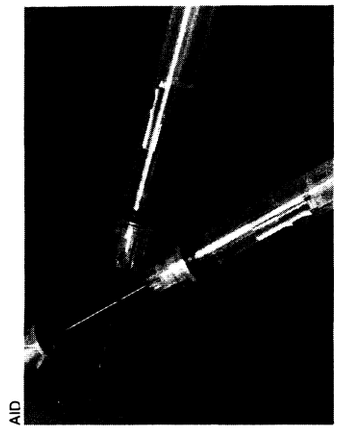

AID

**No second shot.** *Nonreusable syringes may prevent infection.*

## AID Aids AIDS Efforts with New Syringes

Some ideas leave you wondering why no one ever came up with them before. The U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), concerned because health workers in its immunization programs sometimes spread infectious blood diseases, such as AIDS or hepatitis B, with imperfectly sterilized needles, just had one: why not distribute syringes that can't be used more than once?

Within the next year or two, AID should be doing just that. A new syringe, developed by the medical supply company Becton Dickinson in conjunction with AID and the World Health Organization, incorporates a sharp metal flange that prevents withdrawal of the plunger once it is depressed. AID and WHO just completed field trials of the syringe in Pakistan, where health workers were "quite receptive," according to an AID spokesman.

But even this better mousetrap may have a weakness: the one-shot syringe may be safer, but it could also make life harder for health clinics that currently reuse disposable syringes in order to save money. AID has not yet made final plans, but will likely either increase its aid or cut a deal with Becton Dickinson to supply more syringes at a lower cost.

## Director Contenders Just Say No to NIH

The search goes on, and on, and on, and no one will take the job. Washington University chancellor William Danforth has, for a second time, taken himself out of contention for the directorship of the National Institutes of Health. The first time, he said no to a White House "litmus test" on abortion. This time, sources say, he declined the post because negotiations with Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan over the director's authority broke down.

For months, a blue ribbon committee appointed by Sullivan labored to find ways to enhance the NIH director's power in matters such as staff promotions and advisory committee appointments (*Science*, 9 February, p. 628). Despite the committee's many recommendations, HHS officials appear to be determined to hold on to authority over NIH in ways that critics say amounts to micromanagement.

If Danforth couldn't wow the Administration enough to win concessions, who can? Danforth not only is a well-respected scientist, he is (i) a card-carrying Republican, (ii) wealthy enough, thanks to an inheritance from the Ralston Purina fortune, to ignore the paltry pay the government is offering, and (iii) the brother of a U.S. Senator. But insiders say there was no give in the bargaining.

This may also be why another top candidate, Yale dean Leon E. Rosenberg, has decided to stay put. In a formal statement to the Yale faculty, Rosenberg said: "During the past year, numerous news reports have speculated on my candidacy. . . . I wish to resolve this matter definitively. . . . I have decided to remain at Yale University as dean of the School of Medicine."

## How to Save Endangered Species

David P. Hamilton

**Test-tube tiger.** *A Siberian cub gnaws on the hand that feeds him.*

Endangered species are in trouble mainly because their numbers are declining, right? Wrong. According to population biologists, the greatest threat to many species is posed by genetic homogeneity, the result of inbreeding due to natural or man-made population bottlenecks. Many wild cats, for instance, produce high percentages of abnormal sperm which lead to birth defects and increased susceptibility to disease.

That's why reproductive biologists got so excited last April over a fairly routine event—the birth of three cubs to an endangered Siberian tiger at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska. These cubs were conceived through an in vitro fertilization technique developed by biologists at the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park, although two didn't make it for reasons unrelated to IVF. Other zoos have successfully used artificial insemination and embryo transfer in the births of gaur and bongo calves, but the Siberian tiger is the largest zoo animal to successfully undergo IVF. The new technique promises to improve species' genetic variance in two ways: by allowing widely separated or sexually incompatible animals to reproduce and by introducing new genes from untamed populations.

## Primate Find Surprises Biologists

Although they live in them, tamarins don't grow on trees: the tiny but colorful primates have been considered rare finds for biologists used to trekking through the forests of eastern Brazil to find them. But no one would have predicted encountering the rarest of the rare—a troop numbering only a few dozen—in one of the world's most endangered ecosystems, the Atlantic forest region south of São Paulo, Brazil.

The discovery is "one of the most amazing primatological discoveries in this century," says Russell Mittermeier of Conservation International. The new species, named *Leontopithecus caissara*, brings the total of known lion tamarin species to four. Known popularly as the black-faced lion tamarin, the animal is gold with black face, arms, and tail.

The animals live on a wooded 35,000-acre island, inhabited mainly by fishermen and separated by a canal from the province of Paraná near São Paulo. The discoverers, Maria Lucia Lorini and Vanessa Guerra Persson of the Capao da Imbuia Natural History Museum in Paraná, plan further exploration of the island.

Previously, field researchers "always worked from São Paulo to the north" because Paraná, to the south, has lost all but 3% of its forest cover, says Mittermeier. "To find a new species of such importance in a highly developed part of Brazil . . . is little short of phenomenal. It is almost like finding a major new species in the suburbs of Los Angeles."

Although debates may arise over whether the discovery really is a new species, Mittermeier has no doubts. He says