

tingent upon some action; the action therefore becomes more likely. Punishment occurs when an aversive stimulus is delivered contingent upon some action; the action becomes less likely as a result. If in fact the rejection of an article or a grant proposal constituted negative reinforcement, the number of articles and proposals submitted would skyrocket.

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"Mission-Oriented" Agricultural Science

In his editorial "Plant gene expression center" (27 Sept., p. 1465), Philip H. Abelson applauds the formation of the center. He implies, however, that agricultural science is behind medical science and laments the pressure for immediate, practical results in the former.

It should be noted that the "mission-oriented" area of U.S. agriculture is known for efficiency and low-cost production, while U.S. medicine is known for inefficiency and high-cost services. As a percentage of the gross national product, our food costs are among the lowest of all nations and our medical costs are among the highest of developed nations. Could there be a connection between the efficiency of the agricultural industry and the general tendency of agricultural researchers to concentrate on less utopian, more practical solutions? It should be possible for all scientists to support new types of research without knocking the often plodding, but sometimes creative, research that is usually necessary in order to achieve the results commonly used to justify the whole scientific endeavor.

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Clarification

A News & Comment article by Jon Cohen about an investigation of indirect costs charged by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to federal grants and contracts (22 Nov., p. 1103) reported that congressional staff members had inquired about a condominium owned by the Academy at the Watergate building. The article should have noted that NAS officials responded that the apartment, which has served as the residence of the NAS president for 25 years, is not charged to indirect costs but is paid for entirely with private funds.

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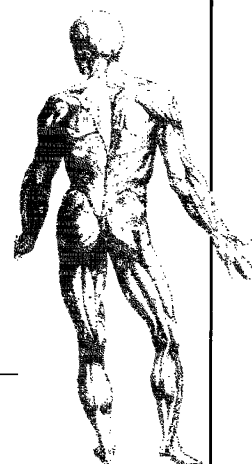
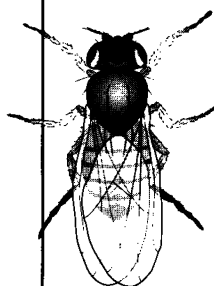
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