

Scientists use nude mice to solve leprosy mystery

Associated Press
SAN ANTONIO, Tex. — Nude mice, freaks of nature born without hair or thymus glands, may help scientists solve mysteries about leprosy, Dr. David Drutz of the University of Texas Health Science Center said.

Although Norwegian scientist Dr. Armauer Hansen isolated the leprosy bacteria 102 years ago, researchers have had little luck studying the disease under laboratory conditions.

The bacilli apparently cannot be grown on artificial surfaces and host model animals tested so far have been disappointing.

But Drutz said Tuesday, "The possibilities for research with the nude mouse are nothing less than astounding."

It is the first time such mice have been used in leprosy research in this country, he said.

Several years ago scientists discovered that leprosy bacilli injected

into a mouse's foot would grow slowly. However, the disease would not disseminate through the animal.

Researchers found that mice with their thymus gland removed could produce the disseminated disease. But the animals died too early.

More recently armadillos were found to be susceptible to leprosy, but only one or two inoculated animals out of 10 would develop widespread infections.

Now Drutz has suggested that a nude mouse with its low tolerance

for disease might be an ideal leprosy research model.

"If someone sneezes, the mice die," Drutz said.

Nude mice are raised in isolated, germ-free colonies.

"As an animal model, the nude mouse looks enormously promising," Dr. Drutz said. "It's an immunological freak. It can't tell self from non-self, and ordinarily that's a lethal defect. Thus in the nude mouse, leprosy bacilli conceivably can grow and bloom unhampered."

Bentsen says jobs most pressing issue

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Bentsen says substantial budget cuts in all areas of government, which he advocates, would not damage attempts to reduce unemployment if the cuts are coupled with certain adjustments.

"We have to get a handle on government spending," he said. But Bentsen refused to say how much he wants cut or where it should be cut until President Ford submits his budget proposals in January.

He said a key to fighting inflation would be reduced lending interest rates and that as president he would put pressure on the Federal Reserve Board to bring about lowered rates.

Bentsen favors removal of price controls from oil and natural gas to assure producers that the return on their investment will be sufficient to make continued exploration for more supplies worthwhile.

"Federal regulation has discouraged exploration for natural gas and encouraged waste of natural gas for 20 years," he said.

He believes the United States will never be able to eliminate all oil imports, but that with increased domestic production and emphasis on energy sources other than oil, virtual energy independence can be established at some unspecified future date.

Use of coal should be increased, he said, and solar energy should eventually become a "cornerstone of our national energy policy."

Bentsen criticized what he said was the failure to present a united front with other oil consuming nations in dealing with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

"We have a big bargaining tool if we can get these consumer na-

tions . . . to bargain together against OPEC countries," he said.

Bentsen said he has someone in mind for the position of secretary of state in any Bentsen administration, but he refused to name him.

"I'd be looking for one that would not be concentrating so much on just China and Russia," he said. "My secretary of state must possess greater expertise in economics, must place higher priority on openness in the process by which we develop foreign policy, and must be far less insistent on running the whole show . . ."

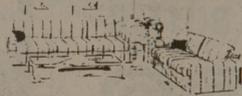
"I'd be trying to trade more where I thought we'd get a quid pro quo. I think there's been too much concern with coming home to some television extravaganza to try to display an aura of success without enough concern for the details of the trade."

Bentsen said he favors continued attempts to reach a strategic arms limitation accord with the Soviet Union, but he refused to specify what it should include, citing a lack of information from the executive branch on which to base an opinion.

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