

Armadillos may transmit leprosy

United Press International
NEW ORLEANS — Armadillo meat is considered a delicacy in South Louisiana, but health officials are warning residents to forgo the treat until it is determined whether armadillos can transmit leprosy to humans.

Health officials said Wednesday they have found over 50 armadillos with leprosy in the state in the last two years.

There have been no reports of humans contracting leprosy from eating armadillo stew, but the health officials still warned Louisiana connoisseurs to avoid eating armadillo meat.

"Don't play with them," said Dr. Gerald Walsh of the Gulf South Research Institute in New Iberia. "And if you have to eat 'em, cook 'em well."

The armadillo is the only known animal species that will naturally develop leprosy following inoculation of the organism into the animal.

"The discovery of leprosy in wild armadillos first came about two years ago. Before they were even put on experiment, the animals were infected with leprosy that had been contracted in the wild."

The health officials' greatest concern is for people who catch the armadillos.

"The caution we would like to underline here is the process of catching them for dinner, so to speak," Walsh said. "You have to be careful because they will scratch and claw and, if the animals are infected, an individual could conceivably be infected by the animal."

Walsh said about 30 to 40 percent of the people in southwest Louisiana eat armadillo stew.

A Louisiana Restaurant Association official said it was an uncommon item on menus around the state.

"Some restaurants serve it as a delicacy," said Melanie Woolverton of the restaurant association. She said they might be served in some of the old, old Cajun restaurants, but as far as being a normal item, not too many restaurants in Louisiana serve it.

Dr. William Cherry, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and Human Resources, said he will ask the Louisiana Legislature for \$75,000 to study potential dangers posed by armadillos.

Commissioner biased Gas firms seek appeal

United Press International
AUSTIN — Attorneys for Coal States Gas Producing Co., questioned Railroad Commissioner Jon P. Newton about his politics, his memory and his feelings toward the company.

But throughout the often sarcastic questioning Wednesday, Newton insisted the public interest was the reason for his vote to force Coastal States and its subsidiary, LoVaca Gathering Co., to refund \$1.6 billion to customers.

Coastal and LoVaca won a court order to question Newton in preparation for challenge of the Railroad Commission's Dec. 12 order requiring the \$1.6 billion refunds and a return to low-price contracts the companies made with municipal utilities in Austin, San Antonio, Corpus Christi and many other areas of South and Central Texas in the early 1960's.

The companies want to show Newton was biased and should not have been allowed to vote on the refund decision.

Coastal's attorney, Tracey DuBose, shouted at Newton at one point Wednesday and sarcastically questioned his memory lapses about

statements attributed to him during his 1976 campaign for the commission.

Newton repeatedly said he was unable to remember what he said at specific times during the campaign. The commissioner instead answered DuBose's questions with lengthy explanations of his general attitude on controversies such as whether LoVaca and Coastal should be forced to fulfill contracts promising long-term, low-cost natural gas supplies.

"You know the effect of the Dec. 12 order if it's upheld will be bankruptcy?" DuBose asked Newton at one point.

"My decision was whether the public interest would be served by relieving LoVaca of its contracts," Newton replied. "It's my opinion that the public interest would not be served by relieving you of your contracts."

The Railroad Commission is scheduled to consider the companies' appeal Monday for a rehearing on the 5-year-old case.

DuBose questioned Newton laboriously about campaign statements on LoVaca and Coastal and newspaper articles quoting him saying the firms "exhibited a public-banned attitude."

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Hill claims subterfuge in Briscoe agency fund

United Press International
AUSTIN — Attorney General John Hill said Thursday Gov. Dolph Briscoe has misled Texans about personnel of one state agency, and said Briscoe's handling of the appointment of State Insurance Board chairman Hugh Yantis stinks.

Hill, who is challenging Briscoe for the Democratic nomination for governor, made the comments during an appearance on the television interview program Texas Weekly.

The attorney general blamed Briscoe for problems in operation of the Governor's Office of Migrant Affairs in which two top ranking administrators have been charged with criminal offenses.

"This is Dolph Briscoe's baby. He fathered GOMA," Hill said. "This wasn't some agency that was established by the Legislature. Dolph Briscoe created it by his own executive order."

Asked how he would have handled the agency differently, Hill responded, "I would not have misled

the people of this state as Gov. Briscoe did.

"He perpetrated an absolute subterfuge as far as the number of people that were working in the governor's office on the so-called payroll of the Governor's Office of Migrant Affairs."

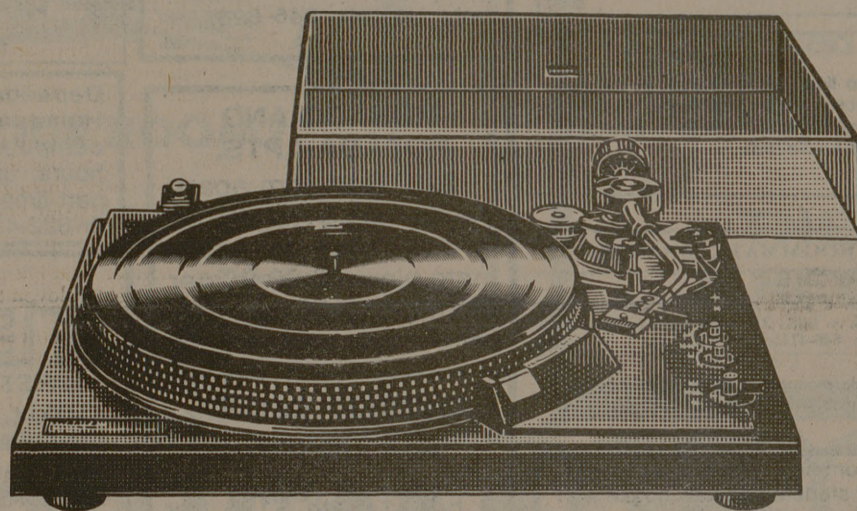
"He told us that he was cutting back on personnel in the governor's office, so he restricted that payroll to nine people on the regular state payroll in that office. But what we didn't know was that he committed that office to contracts with a private agency known as Counterpoint, Inc., which took \$900,000 out of that budget, and they in turn turned around and supported 42 additional employees that were really working for the governor."

Hill said Briscoe's appointment of Yantis to the State Insurance Board over objections of Yantis' home senator shows "how staying in office too long can build up an arrogance of power, a tyranny of power."

"I think it stinks," he said.

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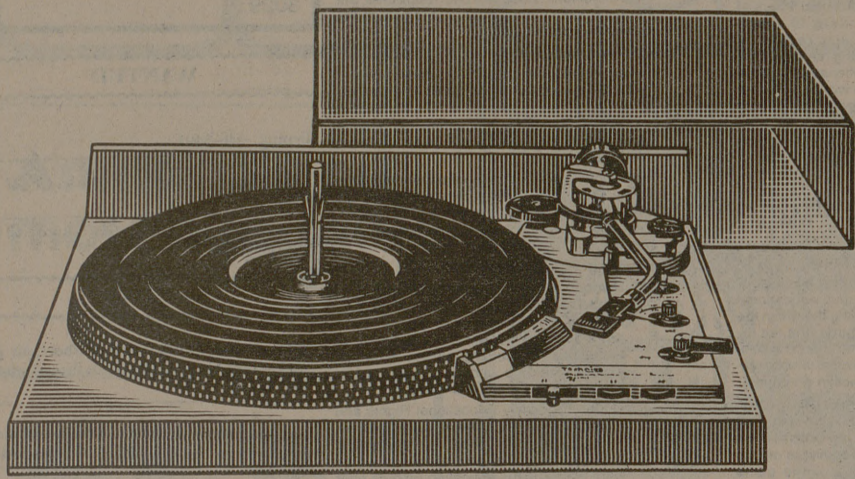


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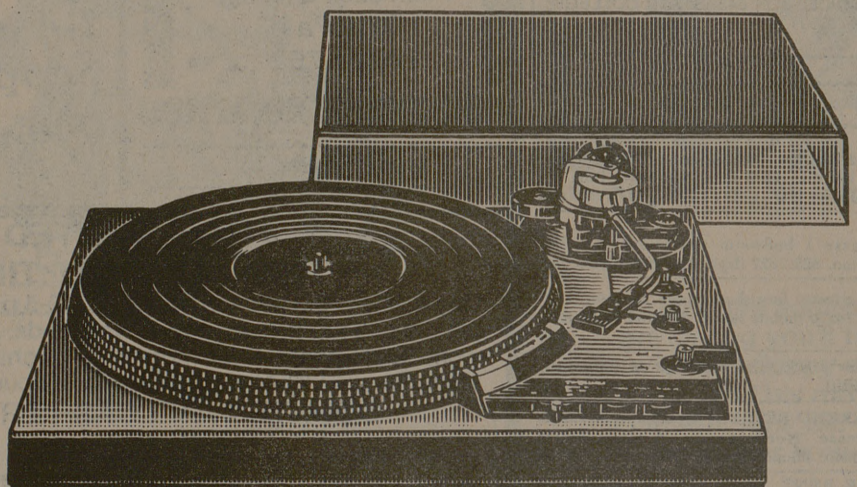
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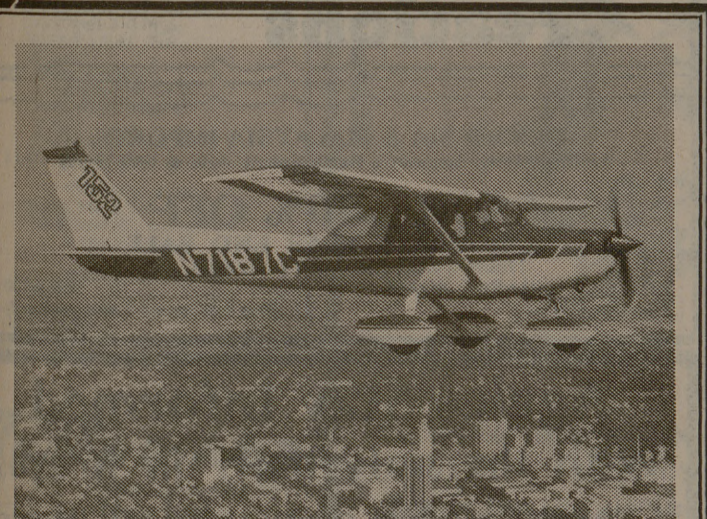
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