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SPEAKERS

- Carolyn Ruffino
Brazos County Rape Crisis Center
- Mahesh Dave, M.D.
Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist
- Brad Lamb
Dir. United Martial Arts College
- Lt. Bernie Kapella
College Station Police Dept.

Armadillo leprosy found in Texas

United Press International
DALLAS — A government study has found that armadillo-borne leprosy — an infectious human disorder — is generally concentrated along a 100-mile-wide coastal strip of Texas, the state with the nation's highest leprosy rate.

"Our studies indicate the leprosy risk grows the closer you get to the (Texas) coast and the farther you move south," said Dr. Keith Clark, director of the state's zoonosis control division.

Zoonosis is the study of animal diseases transmissible to man.

"If, however, you live more than 100 miles from the coast,

the chance of encountering an infected armadillo are less than 2 percent. Down along the coast, the chances are more like 5 to 12 percent."

The findings, which include summaries of five independent studies, were to be released Thursday at the annual "Diseases In Nature" conference. The conference is a spinoff of a World War II committee appointed to protect the nation against Nazi biological weapons.

An advance review by UPI of the three-year surveillance report indicates the danger of leprosy increases with direct contact with animal tissue.

"We know of at least one case in which a man, who dressed

out armadillo meat for sausage, contracted leprosy," said Clark. "There have been other cases, but we haven't confirmed them. "Frankly, nobody knows for sure the cause and effect order of leprosy — whether armadillos give it to humans or humans give it to armadillos."

"One thing for certain," he said, "there is no longer any reason to believe that armadillo leprosy is any different from the human disease."

Clark's study summarized pioneering work by Dr. Jerome Smith at the University of Texas-Calveston, published last year, which reported 21 of 450 armadillo samples — roughly 5

percent — in Texas coastal regions were infected.

"The percentage increased to 12 percent in the Brownsville-Harlingen area," Clark said, where many human leprosy cases are concentrated.

More than 340 samples, analyzed in the report, were gathered by the zoonosis division, Atlanta's Centers for Disease Control, the Gulf South Research Institute and an independent team from Abilene Christian College, he said.

The findings generally confirmed that most infected cases were concentrated in coastal portions of the state, away from the interior.

"These rates reflect the in-

stance within a particular population," he said, "and not necessarily the rate in an entire county or region."

Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by bacteria that attacks the skin, flesh and nerves. It is characterized by skin ulcers and limb deformities.

Texas has more indigenous cases than any other state.

"That's in addition to the cases brought in with the influx of Asians and different immigrants," Clark said. "The number of new cases runs around 100 per year."

"There is more leprosy around than most of us think he said.

Inmate begins hunger strike, officials monitoring condition

United Press International

LEWISBURG, Pa. — Prison officials are monitoring the condition of a Colorado man who launched a hunger strike to protest his confinement at the Lewisburg federal penitentiary, a spokesman said Wednesday.

But Clifford Kinney, executive assistant to Warden George Wilkins, denied allegations by inmate John McBride, 28, of Durango, Colo., that he has been placed in solitary confinement and is being fed intravenously.

"We don't force-feed inmates," said Kinney. "If that became necessary, it would not be done at Lewisburg."

McBride is serving a 40-year

sentence as alleged mastermind of a \$15 million bomb extortion plot against a Gulf Oil refinery in Baytown in 1982. Four people were convicted or pleaded guilty in the scheme.

In a letter released by his former attorney Monday, McBride said his incarceration at Lewisburg violates a 1983 plea agreement that stipulated he would serve his time at Terminal Island, Calif., a minimum-security prison.

Kinney said McBride, who arrived at the maximum-security Lewisburg facility Feb. 15, was moved to the prison's hospital unit March 9 when officials became aware of the hunger strike so his condition could be monitored daily.

McBride claimed in his letter he stopped eating March 2.

Prison physician Dr. Van Strubeck last examined McBride Wednesday morning and "he seems to be okay now," (Strubeck) can see no cause for concern," Kinney said.

Kinney said although McBride refuses food, he has been drinking water and coffee.

He added McBride is held himself in a hospital room, are other inmates with medical problems, "but we don't have solitary confinement here such."

Kinney said if Strubeck determines McBride's health deteriorated to a life-threatening condition, the inmate will be transferred.

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Questions will be accepted after the presentation

AT&T hike inquiry requested

United Press International

AUSTIN — The lawyer who represents consumers in utility rate cases Wednesday asked the Federal Communications Commission to investigate whether AT&T Communications' rate hike request would justify its national management attempts to lobby against general legislation.

AT&T Communications' rate hike request on its part with the Texas Public Utility Commission last week, savings might not be necessary.

But Jim Boyle, consumer counsel in PUC rate cases, he still was concerned the hike could have been used to boost the utility's successful efforts to fight legislation that could have kept telephone rates in check.

"Almost 50 percent of all expenses which AT&T include in its Texas rate filing will be paid to ATT-C (the management firm), and \$133 million of ATT-C's total expenses are devoted to public relations or government affairs departments," Boyle said.

"Ratepayers should not be asked to subsidize AT&T's views on telephone regulation," Boyle said.

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