

THE BATTALION

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The Battalion (USPS 045-360) is published daily, Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters and Monday through Thursday during the summer sessions (except University holidays and exam periods), at Texas A&M University. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77840. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

News: The Battalion news department is managed by students at Texas A&M University in the Division of Student Publication, a unit of the Department of Journalism. Editorial offices are in 013 Reed McDonald Building. E-mail: BATT@TAMVM1.TAMU.EDU. Newsroom phone number is 845-3313. Fax: 845-2647.

Advertising: Publication of advertising does not imply sponsorship or endorsement by The Battalion. For campus, local and national display advertising, call 845-2696. For classified advertising, call 845-0569. Advertising offices are in 015 Reed McDonald and office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Fax: 845-2678.

Subscriptions: A part of the Student Services Fee entitles each Texas A&M student to pick up a single copy of The Battalion. Mail subscriptions are \$20 per semester, \$40 per school year and \$50 per full year. To charge by VISA, MasterCard, Discover or American Express, call 845-2611.



I don't think I'm in New Mexico anymore...

Ana Donohue, from Las Cruces, New Mexico, uses a global positioning system linked to a satellite to map coordinates for computerized maps Sunday afternoon at Research Park. She is currently visiting A&M to learn this technology from the mapping sciences department.

Biological clock contains key to premature births

Evidence found that some early deliveries may be prevented by detecting abnormal hormone levels early in pregnancy.

NEW YORK (AP) — A biological clock that starts ticking early in pregnancy may largely determine when a woman will deliver her baby, says a study suggesting a possible way to prevent premature births.

Evidence for the clock appeared when researchers found abnormal hormone levels early in pregnancy in women who eventually delivered prematurely or well past their due date.

Scientists might be able to prevent many premature births if they can find the clock and learn to adjust it in women with a hormone level showing a high risk for prematurity, researcher Dr.

Roger Smith said.

About 11 percent of births in the United States are premature, coming before the 37th week of pregnancy. Premature babies are at increased risk of death and conditions including cerebral palsy, seizure disorders, blindness, lung disease and mental retardation.

Smith is director of the Maternal Health Research Center at John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle, Australia. He, colleagues there, and others at the University of Reading in England report on their study in the May issue of Nature Medicine.

The study's "remarkable" results provide "a very important piece of the puzzle" about what causes premature births and what governs the timing of normal-length pregnancies, said Dr. Peter Nathanielsz, who studies the biology of pregnancy at Cornell University in Ithaca.

Some premature deliveries are caused by medical conditions like infections that would not be predictable by hormone levels, Smith said.

Pig donors may be answer to shortage of human organs

Scientists' biggest challenge lies in overcoming immunological differences between humans and pigs.

NEW YORK (AP) — Scientists who grafted pig hearts into baboons say they have taken a major step toward the routine transplant of animal organs into people, a high-tech answer to the shortage of human organs.

The pig hearts carried proteins that markedly reduced damage from an initial and normally devastating assault by the immune system.

This attack, called hyperacute rejection, has been considered the biggest barrier to routine transplants of animal organs into people, and the new work shows it has been overcome, researcher Jeffrey Platt said.

Platt is a professor of experimental surgery, pediatrics and immunology at the Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C. The study, done with colleagues at Duke and the biotechnology company Nextran in Princeton, N.J., is reported in the May issue of Nature Medicine.

About 90,000 people a year in the United States could benefit from transplants, but the potential human supply is only 8,000 to 14,000 donors annually, said Roger Evans of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. Evans is on a national

committee studying the use of animals as donors.

In hyperacute rejection, the immune system unleashes proteins that can destroy a transplanted organ's usefulness within minutes. This process is different from the longer-term rejection that transplant recipients stave off by taking drugs.

The challenge was to protect pig organs against hyperacute rejection without shutting down the immune system's ability to unleash the destructive proteins on disease-causing bacteria and viruses.

The answer lay in creating strains of pigs carrying two human genes that tell the pig's blood cells to make two proteins to deliver to the heart's inner lining. Scientists hoped these protective proteins would dampen the immune system assault after transplant.

Two more years of animal research will be needed before scientists can hope to transplant pigs organs into people.

Scientists have now produced pigs that continuously create the protective proteins in their hearts, which should provide longer-lasting protection, Platt said.

Two more years of animal experiments will be needed before scientists can hope to transplant pig organs into people, and other immunological hurdles must still be overcome, he said.

Eventually, pigs may be able to supply hearts, lungs and kidneys to people, he said.

WEDNESDAY • MAY 10TH • WOLF PEN CREEK JACKOPIERCE ONE HELLUVA EVENT AGGIE FINAL EVERYONE SAY GOODBYE TO THE CLASS OF '95 TICKETS ON SALE ROTHERS MAROONED BOOKSTORES RECORDS \$12.50 advance \$14.00 day of event TICKETS BY PHONE 1-800-333-7188 THE BIG FINAL AGGIE EVENT

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PTTS UPDATES - Student Parking Garage Information. This year students are not required to renew their parking garage privileges. PTTS will be automatically renewing students who meet the following requirements: * are enrolled in Fall '95 classes no later than July 1, 1995 * are on the housing list no later than July 1, 1995. Fees will be charged the first week of September. Students who are not enrolled and/or are not on the housing list by July 1, 1995 will be dropped from their parking garage assignment and access card deactivated on August 20, 1995. Graduation News: Handicap parking will be available for graduation on Joe Routh and PA 37 for vehicles displaying handicap designation. Fall Parking Permit News: Student parking permits and bus passes purchased for the fall of 1995 are valid through May 31, 1996. Summer Parking Permit News: May 15 - 19 - Students who preregister before May 1, 1995, for summer parking permits or bus passes will receive them in the mail. May 25 - 31 - Student permits and bus passes may be picked up from the PTTS cashiers in the Rudder Tower lobby between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday - Friday.