

Deformed frogs create concern

HENDERSON, Minn. (AP) — Bruce Nelson was catching frogs for catfish bait last year when he realized something was horribly wrong: Some of the frogs had stumps for legs, and others had as many as four angled hind legs.

"You see deformed things all the time in nature, but nothing like this," Nelson said. All across Minnesota and neighboring Wisconsin, South Dakota and Quebec, scientists and biologists are seeing the same kind of grotesquely misshapen limbs, along with frogs with tails, missing or shrunken eyes, and small sex organs.

"You see deformed things all the time in nature, but nothing like this."

Bruce Nelson
Fisherman

What worries many around the state is whether humans are in danger, too.

"There's a reasonable assumption that if there's an external substance influencing amphibian development, it could influence human development," said David Hoppe, who is on a state-financed team of scientists researching the problem.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency plans to do its own study.

The fact that the abnormalities are widespread suggests that the problem has more than one source, said Hoppe, a herpetologist from the University of Minnesota at Morris.

His best guess is some sort of water pollution, possibly from something airborne.

That could come from heavy metals, pesticides or a whole array of things that settle onto the landscape.

In researching some 10,000 frogs this summer, Hoppe found that the most aquatic frogs had the worst abnormalities.

"I was very surprised, startled even," he said, "because I've seen a lot of frogs over the years and I've never seen anything like that."

FDA confirms heart drug's effectiveness

BOSTON (AP) — A new study confirms the safety of one widely prescribed medicine in a controversial class of heart drugs called calcium channel blockers.

These drugs are often given to treat high blood pressure and angina chest pain. Worries about them arose over a year ago when research suggested they may increase the risk of heart attacks.

In January, an expert panel of the Food and Drug Administration concluded that newer versions of calcium channel blockers are safe.

In the latest study, doctors tested a long-acting calcium channel blocker called Norvasc, or amlodipine, on 1,153 people who were severely ill with heart failure.

Dr. Milton Packer and colleagues from Columbia University published the results in Thursday's issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

During follow-up ranging from six to 33 months, 33 percent of patients getting Norvasc died, compared with 38 percent taking dummy pills. The difference was not statistically meaningful.

While the treatment is not proven to help heart failure patients live longer, the researchers said the study shows the medicine can safely be given to these patients for angina or high blood pressure.

Pfizer Inc., which makes Norvasc, said the drug is taken by about 5 million people worldwide.

Security unspoken

Clinton

Five Americans win Nobel Prize

NEW YORK (AP) — Six scientists — five of them Americans — won Nobel Prizes on Wednesday for discovering soccer ball-shaped molecules dubbed "buckyballs" and a strange form of helium that could shed light on the universe's first few instants.

Two Texans and a Briton won chemistry prizes for discovering a family of carbon molecules that spawned a new field of study, normally known as fullerenes and formally called buckyballs, the ball-shaped molecules were named for architect R. Buckminster Fuller because of their resemblance to his geodesic domes.

The prize was shared by Harold Kroto, 57, who teaches at Sussex University in England, and Robert Curl, Jr., 63, and Richard E. Smalley, 53, of Rice University in Houston. The three discovered buckyballs at Rice in 1985.

Buckyballs haven't become a critical part of daily life, but chemists predict that fullerene technology is on the horizon.

Among other things, they are working on using buckyballs to conduct electricity without resistance or to deliver medicine to the body. Scientists might even be able to turn buckyballs into diamonds.

"What it does is it gives you a building block that can be employed for a number of possibilities," said Stuart Staley, a chemist at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. "There's certainly a lot of excitement."

Fullerenes were thought at first to be an exclusively manmade invention, but after the chemists created them in the laboratory, the molecules were found in natural settings on Earth and in space.

David M. Lee, 65, Robert C. Richardson, 59, and Douglas C. Sheroff, 51, were honored with a

Nobel in physics for finding that at temperatures within two thousandths of a degree of absolute zero, the isotope helium-3 can be made to flow essentially without slowing down. The phenomenon is known as superfluidity.

Lee and Richardson teach at Cornell University in New York. Osheroff is a professor at Stanford University in California. Their research was done at Cornell in the 1970s.

"Superfluid helium-3 just popped up. We weren't really looking for it," Osheroff said from his home in Redwood City, Calif.

The research has recently shed light on the first moments of the universe.

The physical transitions that occur as helium becomes frictionless are similar to processes believed to have taken place a fraction of a second after the big bang, according to the Nobel citation.

The discovery of superfluidity in helium-3 also helps physicists explore the rules that govern the behavior of subatomic matter. With almost all of the heat sucked out of it, helium-3 behaves according to weird quantum rules that are hard to discern under normal conditions.

No technological applications have resulted from the discovery yet, but the possibilities are great. Among other things, the research could help scientists understand superconductivity, the phenomenon whereby some substances at very low temperatures conduct electricity without resistance.

The winners will split the chemistry and physics Nobels, worth \$1.12 million this year.

The prizes will be bestowed on Dec. 10, the anniversary of the death of dynamite inventor Alfred Nobel, whose will created the prizes.

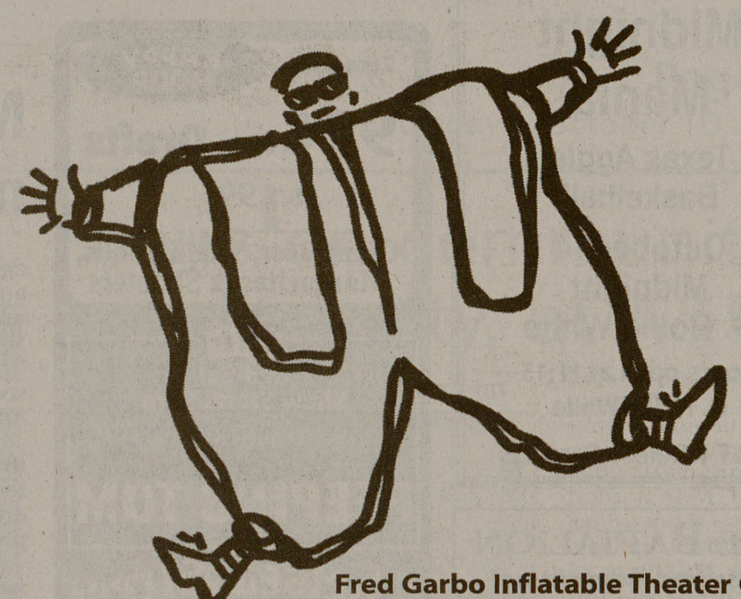


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- 1993 Kary B. Mullis, United States and Michael Smith, Canada
- 1992 Rudolph A. Marcus, Canadian-born American
- 1991 Richard R. Ernst, Switzerland
- 1990 Elias James Corey, United States
- 1989 Sidney Altman and Thomas Cech, United States
- 1988 Johann Döbereiner, Robert Huber and Hartmut Michel, Germany
- 1987 Donald J. Cram and Charles J. Pedersen, United States; Jean-Marie Lehn, France
- 1986 Dudley R. Herschbach and Yuan T. Lee, United States; John C. Polanyi, Canada

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