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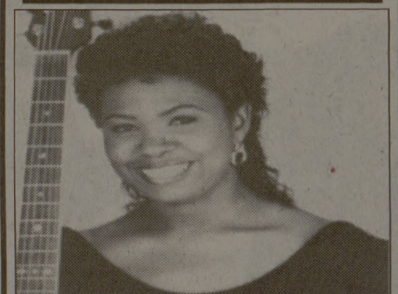
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# Scottish scientists clone sheep

NEW YORK (AP) — It is as if the birds and the bees suddenly have been rendered irrelevant.

Around the world, biologists gathered at laboratory water-coolers Monday to assess the latest installment in a gripping biotech soap opera — the creation, as if by magic, of a wee lamb named Dolly.

Scottish scientists have revealed that they used mammary cells from adult ewes to create little Dolly and eight other lambs in the spitting image — genetically — of their ovine mothers.

"The whole thing is just a mind-blower," said Ursula Goodenough, a geneticist at Washington University in St. Louis.

The achievement raises countless questions about fate, immortality and the nature of self, but none of that will apply to humans or anything else unless scientists can duplicate their feat in other creatures. And years of failed experiments suggest that will not be easy.

"There's certainly no way to rule out the possibility, but I wouldn't wager an awful lot that it would ever be successful in humans in the foreseeable future," said David Kirk, an embryologist at Washington University.

Even if it is, experts are split on how similar a human clone would be to its progenitor.

A clone would look almost identical to the person who spawned it, biologists said, but

personality or susceptibility to some diseases could still vary quite a bit.

Childhood nutrition and even a mother's experiences during pregnancy can affect how a person turns out just as much as genes do.

That means the chances of evil Nazis reproducing dozens of little Hitlers with blood from a handkerchief, as they did in the 1978 movie "The Boys from Brazil," are pretty remote. Never mind the fact that blood cells do not have nuclei, so there is no genetic material in them to clone.

So it is a bit too early to mourn the End Of Sex and declare a Brave New World in which people have first names and model numbers.

In fact, there seems to be something unique about sheep that makes them especially suitable for cloning.

Researchers have tried for decades to do the same trick with frogs and mice, with no luck. Frogs cloned from adults die in the tadpole stage. And cloned mice do not develop far beyond an undifferentiated ball of cells.

So what is it about sheep? Nobody knows. But if someone can figure it out, they may be able to extend the cloning process to pigs, cows, maybe even people.

That would be a boon to the biotechnology industry, which could use the Scottish cloning process to

## Cloning breakthrough

Years of failed experiments suggest it won't be easy to duplicate the feat of genetic engineering that created Dolly, the cloned sheep. Scientists fused 277 eggs; only one led to a lamb.

- 1 Scientists cultivated cells from a ewe's udder tissue in a lab, using a treatment that made the cells essentially dormant.
- 2 The nucleus of an unfertilized sheep egg was removed.
- 3 They fused the ewe's cells to the egg cells with an electric current.



4 The eggs, now equipped with a nucleus, grew into embryos as if they'd been fertilized. The embryos were put into ewes to develop.

make specially designed pigs and cattle for organ transplantation.

"Pigs are of great interest to be used as organ donors for humans," said James Robl, a professor of veterinarian animal science at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

Pigs are advantageous for plants because they are roughly the same size as a responding human part and are susceptible to many of the same related afflictions that can be passed to humans.

## Senator returns to work after arrest

AUSTIN (AP) — Returning to work for the first time since his arrest on sex and firearms charges, Sen. Drew Nixon said Monday he was embarrassed but ready to move on.

Nixon, R-Carthage, missed two days last week after his arrest for allegedly trying to hire an Austin police officer posing as a prostitute.

Police also said Nixon was carrying a loaded, 9-mm handgun in his car at the time of his arrest last Tuesday night.

Nixon has been charged with prostitution, a Class B misdemeanor. He also faces a charge of unlawfully carrying a weapon, a Class A misdemeanor.

On his first day back in the Capitol, Nixon said he deserved to be embarrassed but was ready to continue his legislative duties.

Nixon presented a bill to the Senate Jurisprudence Committee regarding speed limits and defensive driving courses. No action was taken on the bill and members of the com-

mittee did not discuss Nixon's return to the Capitol.

On the Senate floor, Nixon introduced a group of constituents and passed a resolution in their honor. He sent a letter of apology to fellow lawmakers but said taking up Senate time to discuss his situation would not be appropriate.

"I can assure you I will take whatever steps are necessary to see that this type of incident does not occur again to bring shame on myself and those around me," Nixon wrote.

He said he believed fellow lawmakers also are ready to move forward.

"They understand I'm going through a tough time — not necessarily condoning it," Nixon said. "I think they are going to look at each one of my proposals on its merits, whether it's good or bad, and that's the way it should be. I don't think they are going to let this reflect on their votes on particular pieces of legislation."

## Prices for natural gas soar to all-time high

CHICAGO (AP) — Sharon Brown did a double take after opening her February gas bill for her three-bedroom house.

"The price went from \$39 on the budget plan to \$73. I thought they'd inverted the numbers," the Philadelphia woman said. "They said they had to raise it, but that makes no sense because I'm not using any more than I did last year."

Consumers across much of the nation are suffering from sticker shock as they get sharply higher gas bills, despite a relatively mild winter.

Soaring heating oil prices drew national attention early this winter, while prices for natural gas quietly surged to all-time highs amid concern there would not be enough supply to last through the heating season.

Natural gas heats the majority of American homes.

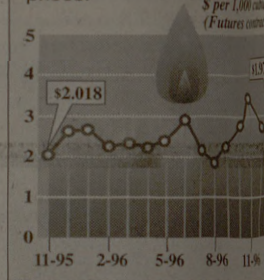
The culprit was unusually cold weather last winter that virtually depleted stored supplies and forced utilities to pay more during the summer to replenish. Prices rose even higher as temperatures well below normal gripped much of the country through the fall and early winter.

Utilities raised rates as much as 50 percent, prompting a barrage of complaints and public hearings. Utility prices are regulated by each state.

The Illinois Commerce Commission asked the state's gas utilities to account for their increases, while New Mexico's Public Utilities Commission ordered rates lowered. New York state lawmakers scheduled hearings for this week to investigate the price spikes.

### Natural gas

Cold weather last winter has raised high gas bills this winter for 9 million American households that use natural gas. Prices peaked in 1996 but bills still reflect the high prices.



Natural gas prices soared in December to about \$4.50 for a 1,000 cubic feet, up from \$3.50 a year earlier. Prices fell sharply after supply worries proved unfounded, but many consumers will not see that immediately reflected in their bills.

Typically, about one-third of the price of the monthly gas bill is attributed to natural gas costs, which are passed on to consumers.

"We've placed inserts in our bills to tell customers that in this circumstance that we have no control over," said Ed Kopp, spokesman for Peoples Gas, a northern Illinois utility.

"It's become that we're really a bearer of bad news, but it's a commodity costs that are passed dollar for dollar to the consumer."

Clarence Washington, a \$300 prepayment for this week's heating bill quickly disappeared into his pocket to pay getting larger by the month.

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