THE BATTA SCI Tech Thursday, April 4, 2002 Termite attack Scientists warn springtime brings out termites By Mandi Vest home could be a sign that ter-THE BATTALION Aggies beware! There is a invaded. so-new predator in town, and The insects yone should be on the lookwood Texas A&M experts are and take it ing the community to look down to the colony underneath the Termites, though small and of sight, can be dangerous to ding structures. Wharton, a professor in the Department of Dr. Roger Gold, a professor Entomology, said it is

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Department of tomology, said Texas weather conducive to these insects. he warmth and humidity, comned with wood in the ground, ovide optimal conditions for

Though termites can live in building structure all year, ey may not be seen until eir mating season, which is in the spring.

"Swarming season is when dult termites, or kings and eens, come out of the ground

In the spring, residents may by moving the soil with them.

reproduce," Gold said.

tart to notice black swarms, which can be thousands of terites. The termites come above ground and move up a mud tube along the side of a structure. They stay in contact with the soil

There are also termites that live above the surface and eat wooden structures that are higher off of the ground. These insects, called dry wood termites, may be harder to see.

always termite sea-

son. If termites are

noticed on the side of

a home, the insects may have been living

beneath the structure for some time.

In the past, Chlordane, a common pesticide, was used to treat building structures and would last for up to 30 years. But Chlordane was banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1978. Since then, other chemicals, called termiticides, have been developed to prevent termite infestations.

Termiticides such as

improvement stores or other shops, but Gold recommended that people hire professionals to spray homes and businesses for termites.

"The major problem with self-application is that the average person does not have the equipment needed for the amount of spraying needed," Gold said.

Treating buildings for termites can be quite expensive. Gold estimates that A&M spends several thousand dollars Seeing soil along the base of a Dursban can be found at home a year on termite treatments,

and he said about \$350 million is annually spent in Texas on treatments. He said the average household spends about \$1,000 a year.

For those who want a more environment-friendly approach, Gold recommended termite bait. In this method a bait, laced with poison, is planted for the termites to find. The termites consume the bait and take it back to the colony where it will

be shared with the other insects. takes much longer than others

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## Proteins cause disease

There is lots of

in principle.

New research suggests nesses as diverse as Alzheimer's, utzfeldt-Jakob disease and t-onset diabetes are caused by eins that fold themselves into ctive shapes, rather than pros that have undergone harmful

sents nical changes. in forms can p together and molecular

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ursday's issue of ournal Nature. reviously, scists believed misfolding an unusual

currence limited erhaps 20 or more protein types. Instead, the effect may be comn to any protein in the body, the earchers reported. Why it curs remains unclear, but the cess is believed to be associated

h diseases that take decades to There is lots of evidence that protein can form these structures principle," said Christopher on of the University of ibridge in England, who helped

one of the studies. Thomas Sudhof, a Dallas-based investigator with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, called the paper a major advance because it demonstrates the particular stage at which the toxic effects of the misfolded proteins can be gauged.

Proteins are the agents of change and chemical messengers in cells, s they develop, these aberrant and they carry out the instructions

encoded in genes. The specific roles they play are dicor on healthy evidence that any protein tated by both their studies in can form these structures makeup and the three-dimensional

shape they take on

when folded. On occasion, that - Christopher Dobson University of Cambridge folding can go awry. Accumulations of

> these rogue proteins are common in what researchers categorize as protein deposition diseases.

> In Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease — a degenerative brain disorder that resembles mad cow disease in its effects — a type of misfolded protein known as a prion may replicate itself and spread to other cells to cause progressive neurological damage.

> In diabetes, protein misfolding may be responsible for the bloodvessel damage, blindness and other debilitating effects of the disease.

### NASA gears up for new missions

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) - NASA is taking more heat for space station spending as it gears up for another major phase of high-flying construction work.

Space shuttle Atlantis is scheduled to lift off Thursday with the newest piece of the international space station, a 44-foot girder. The elaborate, wiredup beam will form the foundation for a framework that ultimately will stretch longer than a football field and support a dazzling collection of solar wings and radiators

Under new anti-terrorism precautions, the 5:13 p.m. noon, 24 hours in advance. Until then, NASA had said only that the launch would take place between 2 p.m.

There was a 40 percent chance that rain or thunderstorms could force a delay.

While technical successes continue to mount in orbit, the latest flap on Earth is over how NASA buys spare parts for the space station. A report by NASA's inspector general office says the space agency has no

assurance it is paying a fair price for these parts. NASA spent \$334 million on station spare parts through 2000. But because the space agency did not negotiate for separate prices and did not adequately keep track of what it paid in the past, it had no way of knowing whether it paid too much, according to the inspector general's report, released Tuesday.

In addition, primary contractor Boeing omitted certain associated costs and, as a result, NASA ended up understating in its annual financial statements the value of space station parts by \$39 million from 1995 through 2000, the report said.

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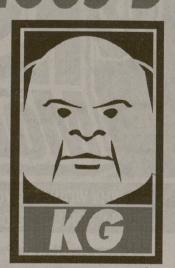
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