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Study Shows the Chernobyl Reactor Accident had Limited Effect on the German Food Chain

A report by H. Brunn et al appearing in the November issue of *Bulletin of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology* (1993; 51:633-39) describes the contamination of muscle tissue from 396 roe-deer from north and middle Hesse, Germany, after the reactor accident in Chernobyl on April 26, 1986.

Environmental contamination with radionuclides, heavy metals and chlorinated hydrocarbons is reflected by the concentration of these substances in the tissues of so-called "biological indicators" — animals such as game and fish that are wholly dependent upon their environment and therefore display environmental contamination with xenobiotics. The xenobiotic burden to the environment and food chain can be monitored by measuring concentration of xenobiotics in muscle tissue of biological indicators.

In the study, muscle tissue from the thighs of 396 roe deer from north and middle Hesse was examined for cesium content for four years after the reactor accident. Results showed that by 1988 the cesium concentrations in the examined deer had returned to approximately the same levels measured before the reactor accident. The researchers concluded, based on the data from the examined roe-deer, that the radioesium released by the reactor accident in Chernobyl, and transported to Germany and throughout Europe, is now entering the food chain in only marginal amounts.

Why do Americans Run from Walking?

Alexis de Tocqueville once observed that Americans would do almost anything to avoid walking....

We have a health club in our office building. In the evening, as I wait for the elevator to take me down two flights to my car (the stairs are nearby but I'm a good American), I can look through a large plate-glass window at the activity inside the club, a veritable page out of Antic Hay. The huge room is apt to be fully occupied with people huffing and puffing on fossil-fuel-driven electromechanical machines designed to extract and dissipate peak loads of neuromuscular energy. In the morning, while I wait for the elevator to take me back up, I am joined by those about to exercise, tote bags in tow, waiting patiently to ride two flights up to the health club, where they will pay to climb electromechanical stairs, going nowhere.

With the thought of generating a little revenue for out-of-pocket expenses, I have suggested that our office lease the building's stairwell, install a booth at the bottom, and sell tickets to an additional exercise facility, the staircase. Our "stairwalker" would be promoted as an adjunct to the machinery at the health club (not a route to it, of course). I might even try it myself one of these days. ☐


Renowned Scientists form International Society of Molecular Evolution

Linus Pauling, James Watson and ten other Nobel laureates have joined to form the International Society of Molecular Evolution, established recently to consolidate and expand research in the field of molecular evolution.

To achieve its goal of encouraging communication and collaboration among research groups in various countries, ISME will organize international scientific meetings in various parts of the world; publish a newsletter; and make available to its members as a benefit of membership its official journal, the *Journal of Molecular Evolution.* ☐

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