COMMERCIAL KANGAROO SLAUGHTER UP 25% FOR 2002

New federal Environment Minister, David Kemp, has supported huge increases in commercial killing quotas for kangaroos for 2002. The Minister's approval means that almost 7 million kangaroos (6.94M) and wallabies can be killed in Australia – the largest kill quota ever, and up from 5.5 million in 2001. Queensland particularly, and New South Wales, account for most of the massive increases. Queensland has risen from 2.8 million to 3.8 million this year, while the NSW quota rose from 1.5 million to just over 2 million kangaroos that can be killed for the commercial trade this year. The commercial quotas relate only to kangaroos killed for profit. In addition, an unknown number of kangaroos are killed under State Government damage mitigation permits and by illegal shooters, and hundreds of thousands of dependent joeys are killed or die after females are shot or wounded.

AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTARY ENVIRONMENT LABELLING STANDARDS RELEASED

The Australian Environmental Labelling Association (AELA) has released the first 14 voluntary environmental labelling standards for comment by industry and other stakeholders of a national eco-labeling program. The program aims to implement a market incentive for products to be redesigned and improved in their environmental performance. It is a voluntary program for industry with an outstanding potential to deliver increased market share and greater consumer loyalty to progressive companies.

The standards, in 4 categories, require that the manufacturer produces evidence that their product meets these basic regulatory requirements and give consumers confidence that the product is of good quality, that there are no environmental loads outside of regulatory limits and that the product is manufactured under fair and reasonable working conditions. The fourth category is specific environmental performance benchmarks which vary throughout the standards.

The Association believes that, at this time, the current organic food labels should be more widely supported by the Australian consumer. The voluntary environmental labelling standards are available for public download from www.aela.org.au

ALZHEIMER’S PATIENTS LOW IN B-GROUP VITAMINS

A Swedish study of 78 Alzheimer’s patients found that more than half had low levels of B12 and folic acid. Researcher, Hui-Xin Wang, says that they are not yet certain if poor nutrition causes the disease, although one theory speculates that insufficient vitamin intake increases levels of the amino acid, homocysteine, which can destroy cells.

Higher levels of homocysteine are associated with life-threatening clogged arteries, both above and below the neck. It is not clear whether folate in vitamin supplements can be absorbed efficiently so researchers agree that a higher intake of whole grains, leafy green vegetables, beans and peas is vitally important.

Good Medicine, Autumn 2001

RUSSIAN REBELS

Before the revolution, Russia was littered with vegetarian societies, helped along by the father of the movement, Leo Tolstoy, who wrote, "The more compassionate we are to animals, the better it is for our soul."

Fortunes were reversed under communism, when vegetarianism was banned, being seen as an imperialist trait. Today it has made a comeback and a recently opened Moscow vegetarian restaurant, the Dzhangirnath, is set to spread elsewhere.

VivaLife, 19, Autumn/Winter 2001

HUMAN FAT FACILITATES STEM CELL RESEARCH

Could a cure for a host of human illnesses come from human fat?

Scientists from UCLA and the University of Pittsburgh agree. A half pound of human fat contains as many as 100 million stem cells, the highly adaptable cells that act as a reserve for replacing a variety of cell types when the cells die.

The researchers purified fat discarded after liposuction procedures, broke apart the cells with an enzyme treatment, and successfully grew bone, cartilage and muscle tissue. The research offers promise of cures for Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, Parkinson’s disease and a vast array of other conditions without the controversial use of animals or aborted foetuses.

Tissue Engineering 2001, April, 7:211:25

SALICYLIC ACID

A recently published paper looks at one relatively new theory about why vegetarians appear to suffer less from various diseases. The authors measured the salicylic acid in the blood serum of subjects not taking aspirin, and compared the acid concentrations in the serum of vegetarians, non-vegetarians and patients taking low-dose aspirin. Salicylic acid is the main anti-inflammatory component of aspirin, which is widely prescribed to reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Research also suggests that aspirin may combat bowel, breast and lung cancer as well as Alzheimer’s disease. When the researchers analysed the blood samples taken from 37 vegetarians and 39 meat-eaters in their early 40s, they found that blood levels of salicylic acid were up to 12 times higher in the vegetarians. Although average blood levels of the acid were much lower among the vegetarians than among 14 diabetic patients in their late 50s who were taking 75mg of aspirin a day, the range of blood values overlapped between these two groups. The researchers pointed out that, although dietary intake does not mimic the anti-clotting properties of aspirin, most cardiovascular disease is the result of artery narrowing and hardening, which is a chronic inflammatory disease process. They added that even very low levels of dietary salicylic acid may inhibit powerful anti-inflammatory enzymes. This perhaps explains why a diet rich in fruits and vegetables protects vegetarians from serious illnesses like heart disease and bowel cancer, they suggested.

Journal of Clinical Pathology 2001; 54: 553-5

CHILDREN, FOOD AND TELEVISION

A US study found that about 25% of children’s food intake occurs while they are watching television. Health experts at a London conference said that restricting the amount of television they are allowed to watch could help reduce obesity among children. Also, TV influences what children eat as well as how much and where they eat. It is also associated with a decrease in physical activity, an underlying cause of the worldwide obesity epidemic. Australian children watch 20 to 30 hours of television per week on average.

“Nothing is worth more than this day.”
— Goethe