

# WorldWatch

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## Genetics

» European scientists have created the world's first genetically modified mosquito, with which they could eliminate malaria by introducing harmless versions of the insect into the world. A piece of foreign DNA introduced into mosquito eggs "jumped" into the chromosomes of the larvae, becoming part of the insects' genetic makeup. An estimated 2.7 million people die from malaria each year.

» An Oxford team is considering reconstructing the 1918 influenza virus that killed 20 million people worldwide. Its aim would be to discover just what made the 1918 "Spanish flu" so deadly and devise better protection against future flu epidemics.

## AIDS/HIV

» In a quiet but major shift in U.S. policy, 70 HIV-positive immigrants can now enter the United States via a waiver of current rules. The government will settle them in Chicago, New York, Boston, San Diego, Minneapolis and San Francisco in a "test" before allowing more to enter the country.

» The International Labor Organization reports that AIDS will have a major impact on the size of the world labor force, saying that sub-Saharan Africa in particular will be most affected. Some African companies have begun to hire or train two or three employees for the same job if they suspect that those in key positions will succumb to AIDS.

» Worldwide AIDS Statistics:

- » 5.6 million new cases in 1999
- » 2.6 million deaths in 1999
- » 16 million have died since 1981
- » 33.6 million currently have AIDS
- » 5 young people contract AIDS every minute worldwide

## Disease

» Europe risks a hepatitis epidemic unless countries establish mass immigration programs to fight the virus, experts warn. Increased travel by Europeans abroad and the arrival of people from outside Europe, including refugees, heighten the chance of a hepatitis-A epidemic. Outbreaks have recently occurred in Italy and Spain.

» Nearly 15 million people in India suffer from tuberculosis. One person dies from it there every minute.

» Germany, Italy and Spain are likely to have been infected by mad cow disease (BSE), despite official insistence that their herds are clean. The disease—a potential trigger for a fatal brain disorder in humans—cannot be ruled out in four other European countries, as well as Australia, Canada and the United States, which also contend they are BSE-free.

» The World Health Organization (WHO) warns that increasing levels of drug resistance could render many antibiotics useless within 10 years and that "the world may only have a decade or two to make optimal use of many medicines presently available to stop infectious diseases. We are literally in a race against time to bring levels of infectious disease down worldwide before the diseases wear the drugs down first."

» WHO estimates that every year, pesticide poisoning affects one million people and causes over 20,000 deaths. It warns, however, that global demand for the chemical is growing, primarily in developing countries.

## **Israel**

A crisis is brewing over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Muslims who control the area are building new mosques along the Eastern wall to go with the ones already on Mount Moriah. They are also intent on destroying the remaining portions of the ancient Temple walls. Members of the Israeli Knesset have recently been banned from observing the construction sites, and a weak Israeli government is loathe to stop the construction, fearing war in the Middle East while at the same time showing great concern that a civil war could break out among Jews in Israel who want the construction halted.

## **Homosexuality**

» Vermont has approved its first gay marriage.

» In its official brochure, Sydney, Australia, boasts of being second only to San Francisco as a "gay center."

» Seattle now has the first gay Parent Teacher Association as an adjunct to the regular PTA. Its 247 members recently assembled to view a film about historically important American gays.

## **Famine**

The United Nations recently appealed for \$378 million to save the lives of drought victims in five African countries and avoid a human tragedy of "historic proportions," as drought continues and below-normal rainfalls are predicted for the near future.