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'Breathing' lessons

Tonight, modern dance choreographer Bill T. Jones brings his solo piece to the Lied. A&E, PAGE 10

Standing Out

Dalhia Ingram and the Nebraska track team will host the Frank Sevigne Invitational. SPORTS, PAGE 16



Questions surround research

Groups not satisfied with UNMC's answer to letter

By Kimberly Sweet

Staff writer

Leaders of three anti-abortion groups in Nebraska want more answers from University of Nebraska Medical Center officials about research being done with aborted fetal tissue.

In a letter drafted Tuesday to Robert Bartee, executive assistant to the chancellor at UNMC, the three leaders requested information and documentation under the Freedom of Information Act.

Leaders of Nebraska Right to Life, Metro Right to Life and the Nebraska Family Council cosigned the letter, asking for more detailed answers to 17 questions they presented to the NU Board of Regents at its December meeting.

Bartee signed and sent a letter on behalf of UNMC officials who provided answers to the 17 questions on Feb. 1.

But Julie Schmit-Albin, executive director of Nebraska Right to Life, said the responses UNMC officials provided weren't enough.

"We did not feel they adequately answered all the questions," Schmit-Albin said. "The tone of their response was curt."

In the letter, Schmit-Albin, along with Metro Right to Life President Bob Blank and Nebraska Family Council Director Guyla Mills, asked for specific documentation under the Freedom of Information Act concerning the research.

In the letter, the three ask for specific details on how LeRoy Carhart, the physician who provides the aborted fetal tissue to the university, obtains the brain cells used for research.

They also ask for documentation proving the fetus is dead and the heart is stopped when research is being conducted.

The leaders want to know which individuals are assigned to oversee the procedure Carhart uses to extract the tissue.

They also want to see the consent forms the women have to sign and records that can prove whether the cells were obtained through a partial-birth abortion procedure.

The letter requests information concerning how much tissue is currently acquired through miscarried and still-born babies.

It also asks if UNMC receives tissue from any of the four universities it collaborates with in its fetal cell research.

According to the response letter Bartee sent to the anti-abortion groups, the institutions include Columbia

Please see UNMC on 6

Melanie Falk/DN
FOR EXTRA CREDIT, Alan Christensen, an associate professor of biology, has asked students in his genetics classes to go outside and observe characteristics of cats as a way to determine their genotypes.

Here kitty, kitty: Cats help students learn about genes

By John Hejkal
Staff writer

Whether you love or hate them, there is one thing you absolutely cannot deny. Cats are useful for teaching genetics.

At least, that's what Alan Christensen, associate professor of biology at UNL, has discovered.

In 1995, Christensen decided to give his Biological Sciences 301 genetics class an opportunity to earn extra credit by filling out a worksheet on a cat's genotype. A genotype describes a specific genetic aspect of an organism.

Most of the students observe cats from friends' houses, pet stores, the Humane Society or their own homes, he said. Some look at stray cats.

"You actually can get a remarkable amount of a cat's genetic background from just a quick look," Christensen said.

Students can tell four or five aspects of a cat's genotype with an easy, non-invasive examination. He said he instructed students not to intrude upon cats to check gender.

"It's completely cat-friendly," he said.

Students observe characteristics such as whether a cat is long- or short-haired, is white, has orange fur patterns or has piebald spotting, which includes white blotches.

Looking at these things can give clues to a cat's genotype.

Christensen passed his idea on to John Osterman, associate professor of biology, who is teaching the genetics course this semester.

"It was clear to me that this was a good way of getting students to see a lot of the concepts discussed in class," Osterman said.

He said the project makes genetics more real for the students. Many of the organisms they study in class are not so much a part of

Please see CATS on 7

Medical care at state prisons examined

"It would have been simple for us to ignore this, but it was the right thing to do."

Marshal Lux
State ombudsman

■ After unfavorable ombudsman report, investigations into correctional services continue.

By Michelle Starr

Staff writer

The use of maintenance equipment during surgical procedures, a disregard for inmates needing medicine and untrained medical staff are all cited in a report criticizing medical services at state prisons, released on Nov. 23.

In response to inmates' complaints, the state

ombudsman investigated the medical facilities in the correctional institutions.

A five-member task force appointed by Gov. Mike Johanns will meet for the second time today to continue its independent investigation of the State Department of Correctional Services Medical Services System.

The investigation is in response to the Nov. 23 release of the state ombudsman's report.

One complaint was in a letter from Heather Cornwell, an inmate at Nebraska Correctional Center for Women in York.

She said: "(Medical staff) have the attitude that they are better or higher up than any inmates, and they don't have to listen to inmates' needs if they

are 'busy.'"

Marshal Lux, the state's ombudsman, said: "The punishment these men and women receive is the loss of their liberty. That does not pertain to pain and suffering during medical care."

At today's meeting, Harold Clarke, director of the Department of Correctional Services, and his staff — including doctors John Cherry, Richard Elliot, George Osborne and physicians' assistant Dan Danaher — will present information.

Also, Elkhorn Sen. Dwite Pedersen will talk about medical cases he is familiar with, said Marla Augustine, spokeswoman for the Nebraska Health

Please see MEDICAL on 6