

SEVEN DAYS

The news in brief

RESEARCH

Ebola vaccine

An experimental Ebola vaccine seems to confer total protection against infection in people who are at high risk of contracting the virus, according to a trial in Guinea (A. M. Henao-Restrepo *et al.* *Lancet* [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)61117-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)61117-5); 2015). The vaccine, developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada and licensed to drug company Merck, is made from a livestock virus that has been engineered to produce an Ebola protein. The trial included two arms: of the 2,014 people who received the vaccine immediately, none developed Ebola ten days after getting the vaccine. There were 16 infections in the 2,380 people who were given the vaccine 3 weeks later. See page 13 for more.

Rice retraction

A paper claiming that the genetically engineered crop Golden Rice was an effective vitamin A supplement in children in China was retracted from *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* on 29 July. The journal retracted the paper (G. Tang *et al.* *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* **96**, 658–664; 2012) because the authors, led by Guangwen Tang of Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts, did not fulfil ethical requirements. Among other things, the journal says, they did not provide evidence that they had ethical approval for their experiments. The authors filed an injunction last year to stop the retraction, but were denied one by a Massachusetts court on 17 July.

EVENTS

White rhino dies

Just four northern white rhinos (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) remain in the world



HAWAII DEPT. LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Arrests in Hawaii over telescopes

Protests over telescope building on Hawaii's mountains led to the arrest on the night of 30 July of more than 20 demonstrators on the island of Maui, where a 4.2-metre solar telescope is under construction on Haleakala. Seven protesters were also arrested at Mauna Kea on Big Island, in the latest escalation in the

stand-off over adding the planned Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) to the 13 telescopes near the summit of Mauna Kea, which is sacred to Native Hawaiians. Protestors are also expected at the International Astronomical Union meeting in Honolulu from 3 to 14 August. Construction of the TMT remains on hold indefinitely.

after a female named Nabiré died at the Dvůr Králové Zoo in the Czech Republic on 27 July. The northern white rhino is a subspecies of the white rhino, which numbers around 20,000 in the wild. The zoo reported that Nabiré died when a large cyst inside her ruptured. This leaves one male and two female northern white rhinos in Kenya and one female in San Diego, California.

Crash investigation

SpaceShipTwo, a rocket plane owned by spaceflight company Virgin Galactic, broke up during a test flight in October 2014 because the co-pilot activated a braking system too soon. In its 28 July report on the crash, the US National Transportation

Safety Board stated that the plane's designer, Scaled Composites in Mojave, California, failed to account for human error in the pre-flight hazard analysis that it provided to federal-aviation regulators. This omission ultimately led to the accident.

Anthrax grounded

The US shipping company FedEx says that it will stop carrying dangerous pathogens, or 'select agents'. The move comes after the US military announced in May that it had accidentally shipped live anthrax spores to nearly 200 labs in 9 countries. According to *USA Today*, which revealed the announcement on 29 July, FedEx is one of only two companies that ship select

agents, leaving researchers concerned that it will be difficult to transport samples in the case of an epidemic. FedEx says that it carried at least one of the live anthrax samples, from Dugway Proving Ground in Utah.

POLICY

Punish poaching

In a resolution passed by its general assembly on 30 July, the United Nations asked its members to step up the fight against wildlife crime. The decree expresses "serious concern" over the poaching of rhinos and elephants in Africa and urges member states to strengthen legislation to prevent and prosecute illegal trade. The resolution follows the London

Declaration of February 2014, in which 41 nations agreed to deem poaching a serious crime — a technical UN term designed to result in harsher punishment for offenders.

US emissions curb

US President Barack Obama announced landmark regulations on 3 August to curb greenhouse-gas emissions from power plants. The regulations, developed by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), call for a 32% reduction in emissions from the 2005 level by 2030. The target is stricter than the one proposed in June last year, which laid out a 30% cut. US states must now develop plans for how to reach the targets and submit them to the EPA by September 2016. See go.nature.com/fbidf5 for more.

Chimp ruling

Chimpanzees are not legal persons, a New York court ruled on 29 July. The activist group Nonhuman Rights Project had filed a suit in 2013 on behalf of two research chimpanzees at Stony Brook University in New York, arguing that the animals were being unlawfully detained. In her decision, judge Barbara Jaffe wrote that she was bound by legal precedent. But she did not discount the group's argument, saying



that the judicial system is slow to embrace change, but chimpanzees might one day gain legal rights.

PEOPLE

Physics spy suspect

A Russian physicist who worked in the Netherlands is under suspicion of having passed confidential information to the Russian intelligence service. Photonics and quantum-computing researcher Ivan Agafonov, who denies the allegations, worked at the Eindhoven University of Technology (TUE). A statement published by the TUE on 28 July says that the university was informed by Dutch intelligence services in July 2014 that Agafonov was in contact with Russian intelligence services. The statement adds that the university has terminated Agafonov's employment,

and Dutch authorities have revoked his residency permit on suspicion of espionage.

Telescope head

The president of the Giant Magellan Telescope Organization (GMTO) has stepped down. Physicist Ed Moses led the GMTO for less than a year. He left the post to deal with family matters, according to a 28 July statement by the governing board. Efforts to build the US\$1-billion telescope — which is scheduled for first light in 2022 — will be led by Patrick McCarthy, an astronomer at the Las Campanas Observatory in La Serena, Chile, who has previously helped to lead the GMTO, until a replacement is appointed.

Intelligence chief

Jason Matheny has been made director of the US Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA), the agency announced on 3 August. IARPA funds high-risk, high-pay-off research for the US intelligence agencies. Matheny, who previously founded biotechnology organizations working to develop lab-grown meat, has directed IARPA's efforts to forecast events and scientific advances. He will be the agency's third director since it was founded in 2006.

COMING UP

9–13 AUGUST

Researchers with an interest in how light can be used to probe anything from nanoscale sensors to the outer cosmos meet in San Diego, California, at the SPIE Optics + Photonics conference. go.nature.com/48vevv

8–12 AUGUST

The 12th World Congress on Inflammation convenes in Boston, Massachusetts. Discussions will cover the latest research on the role of inflammation in disease and ways to control or halt it. inflammation2015.org

9–13 AUGUST

How do logic and relativity interconnect? Find out at the 2nd Logic, Relativity and Beyond conference in Budapest, Hungary. go.nature.com/st8s87

FACILITIES

Ecology funding cut

The US National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) — a countrywide project to measure the effects of climate change — will cancel its experiment to monitor how streams respond to simulated environmental stressors. The move comes after the National Science Foundation told programme managers on 31 July that it was changing the scope of the project. NEON has a budget of US\$433.7-million over 5 years. It is constructing more than 100 data-collection sites around the United States, but it has faced charges of mismanagement (see *Nature* <http://doi.org/6k5>; 2014).

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TREND WATCH

This month marks the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina's landfall along the northern Gulf of Mexico coast. The destruction left by the hurricane prompted the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other scientists to put more effort into developing tools and techniques to improve the accuracy of their forecasts. The forecast error on NOAA's hurricane-path predictions two days ahead of landfall decreased from 204 kilometres in 2005 to 120 kilometres in 2014.

IMPROVING HURRICANE PREDICTION

NOAA's ability to predict where a hurricane in the Atlantic basin will hit in the hours preceding landfall has improved steadily.

