

SCORECARD

**Curry**

Japanese curry-lovers can now experience

the taste of space, as pouches of curry identical to those eaten on the International Space Station have gone on public sale.

**Bacon**

The World Cancer Research Fund has

branded the breakfast treat as one of the top food no-nos if you want to avoid cancer.

ZOO NEWS

Dolphin danger

Conservationists want to stop children with disabilities such as autism from swimming with dolphins. Far from being therapeutic, they say the aquatic mammals' play is a danger to kids.

ON THE RECORD

“An airport with 50 million passengers and countless take-offs and landings per day is not the place for a large wild cat community.”

Paquale DiFulco of the New York port authority explains the city's decision to round up the estimated 75 feral cats roaming JFK airport.

J. LITTLEJOHN/ALAMY



NUMBER CRUNCH

500 million people in India do not have access to toilets.

10 billion rupees

(US\$255 million) has been pledged by the Indian government to build toilets for the country's poor.

2012 is the deadline the government has set for eradicating open-air defecation.

Sources: Reuters, The Times, Mainichi Daily News



Poor follow-up hampers malaria projects

The incidence of malaria in some African countries may soon approach that of the eastern Mediterranean as a result of increased use of insecticide-treated mosquito bednets, spraying and more effective drugs. The first analyses of the effects of such interventions in the field indicate that they have had a direct and major effect on the malaria burden in Kenya and in Tanzania's Zanzibar archipelago.

However, a lack of global coordination on eradication projects and poor data evaluation are jeopardizing malaria-control programmes in the worst-affected parts of the continent. Studies of the actual impact of control programmes on public health and mortality are surprisingly few, and as a result there is a worrying paucity of data.

“The biggest flaw in current malaria-control efforts is that we need to invest more in disease surveillance systems to know the true story of what is really happening in Africa,” says Mark Grabowsky, Malaria Program Manager at the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. What's needed, says one prominent international health official who wishes to remain anonymous, is a greater international focus to put in place tools to compare data and standardize protocols. This has been achieved for diseases such as polio and measles, in which standardized data are available by district and month in Africa. There are no data of comparable quality for malaria, he says, adding that most reports of successes have been anecdotal.

One study to evaluate the success of these pro-

grammes was carried out by Bob Snow's group at the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI)-Wellcome Trust Collaborative Research Programme in Nairobi, and an international team. The researchers found that paediatric malaria admissions at hospitals on the Kenyan coast have fallen by up to 63% since 1999, as a result of interventions such as new drugs called artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs)¹.

“We are going through an epidemiological transition.”

Snow's group also studied about 3,500 children in 72 rural areas of Kenya and found that bednet use was linked to a 44% reduction in mortality².

Snow says he is convinced that the decreases in malaria in Kenya are a direct result of the rise in bednet coverage in the zone between 2004 and 2006 from 7% to 67% of children, and the fact that 85% of rural clinics now stock ACTs that were non-existent only a few years ago. “I think we are going through an epidemiological transition because of scaling up of intervention coverage,” says Snow, who believes that the epidemiology of malaria in many African countries is as a result shifting closer to that of the eastern Mediterranean region, where malaria incidence is at a more containable level of fewer than 10 in every 1,000, compared with 350 in every 1,000 Africans.

Data from Zanzibar, published this week by Achuyt Bhattarai at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm and his colleagues, also show that malaria deaths dropped to one-quarter of previous levels between 2002 and 2005 after the introduction of ACTs and widened use of bed-

S. MEISEL/MAGNUM PHOTOS