

CORRESPONDENCE

ANIMAL WELFARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

To the editor:

I am writing this letter with some trepidation since it is at risk of misinterpretation.

I was very disturbed by "The First Word" (*BioTechnology* 7:533 June '89).

Although at first sight the article is amusing and was undoubtedly meant to be so, articles of this kind play into the hands of the animal welfare activists.

Unless you are faced on a constant day-to-day basis with the unrelenting criticism and assaults that these organizations are capable of making, you may not appreciate the full sensitivity of this issue. As you are well aware, many segments of the animal welfare community are disturbed by the raising and killing of animals for the creation of fur coats. Your amusing editorial, albeit well-intentioned, nonetheless plays directly into the hands of those who would argue that the scientific community displays appalling insensitivity to the issue of animal welfare. No matter how inadvertent, I believe that your editorial has contributed to this image.

The environment in which science has to operate in its interface with diverse public constituencies is a delicate one. I hope that you and other members of the editorial staff will be more aware that issues of this kind can all-too-easily rebound when dealing with a topic that is as emotional as the animal welfare debate.

A number of people in my organization have already brought it to my attention that this is an issue which they view as in poor taste.

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LEFT OUT LUCIFERASE

To the editor:

I would like to point out an omission in the article, "Crop Biotech '89: Research Efforts are Market Driven" (*BioTechnology* 7:337, Apr. '89). Table 1 on page 339 should have included microbial luciferase as well as firefly luciferase as a scoreable marker (see Koncz et al. in *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.* 84:131, '87). The advantage of the microbial luciferase vs. the fire-

fly luciferase is the elimination of the need for the luciferin co-factor. Only a volatile reductant is needed to produce light emission by microbial luciferase. Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research has filed a patent application on the bacterial luciferase system in plants.

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MISSING MICROBIAL

To the editor:

It was a delight turned chagrin when I picked up the May '89 issue of *BioTechnology* and found your article "Microbial Product Discovery in the Biotech Age" (*BioTechnology* 7:427, May '89). My delight quickly faded as I failed to find reference to Panlabs Inc., which is nearing its 20th year in fermentation screening.

As you know, Panlabs was involved early in the discovery and screening

of antibiotic and enzyme strains and products. Panlabs has also been actively screening for secondary metabolites with therapeutic applications other than anti-infectives for several years. This was evidenced by Eastman Kodak's public announcement of a multi-year research agreement with Panlabs, Inc. some three years ago. (Other examples abound, but Panlabs is known for keeping work confidential unless the client has released the information.)

With laboratories in Taiwan, Seattle, and a new facility being developed in the U.K., our company plays a vital role in our clients' research objectives. Our role in microbial product discovery has, to say the least, been significant.

John A. Kelley
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