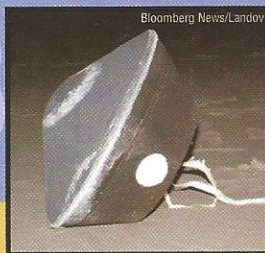


05-06

Science and Nature

- ▼ A global pandemic is feared as the avian flu claims 73 lives in Asia by the end of December and threatens to spread across the world.



- ▲ After seven years and 2.88 billion miles, NASA's Stardust capsule returns to earth carrying dust particles from the tail of the comet Wild 2. Scientists believe the samples hold clues to the formation of the Solar System.



- ▲ The American Dental Association cites bottled water and its lack of fluoride as a major contributing factor in the rise of tooth decay in children.



- ▲ According to recent research, chocolate can be a healthy treat thanks to its high content of flavonoids, which help maintain good circulation and reduce blood clotting.

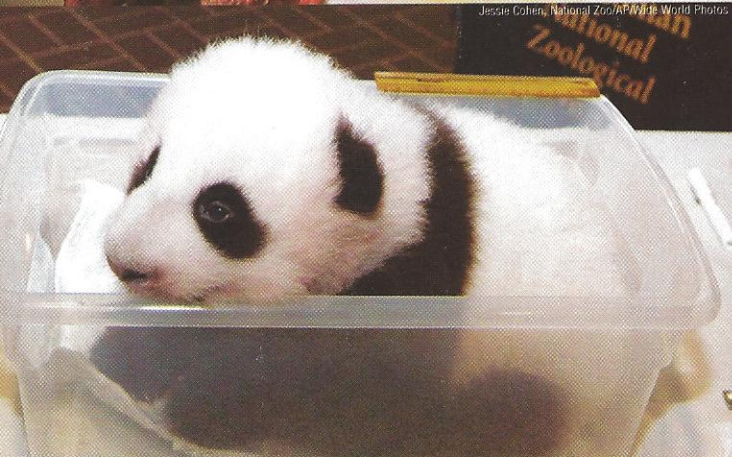


Bogdan Cristel/Reuters/Corbis



Bloomberg News/Landov

- ▲ A vaccine that may potentially fight recurring cancer cells is successfully tested on 14 breast cancer survivors. It is hailed as the first step toward preventing the disease.



Jessie Cohen/National Zoo/AP/Wide World Photos

- ▲ The Sichuan Wolong Panda Protection and Breed Center in China deals with a baby boom — 16 pandas, including five sets of twins, are born between July and November 2005.

- In August, U.S. astronaut Stephen Robinson successfully completes an unprecedented emergency repair of the space shuttle Discovery while in orbit.



NASA TV/AP/Wide World Photos