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## Mutant mice point way to healthy hearts

Feb 4, 2004

PARIS (AFP) – Farm animals could be genetically modified to produce fish oils that help prevent heart disease in humans, according to a controversial suggestion to be published on Thursday in *Nature*, the British weekly science journal.

Biotech researchers in the United States slotted a gene from an earthworm into the genetic code of mice so that they were able to convert ordinary fatty acids (omega-6) into the omega-3 version, the kind of healthy oil that abounds in fish.

The mutant mice were fed the same diet as normal mice. They were then killed and their tissues dissected to see how much omega-3 they had.

The modified mice had far higher levels of omega-3 than their counterparts. The proportion of omega-6 to omega-3, which varied from 20 to one or as much as 50 to one depending on the tissue, plummeted to almost one to one.

The gene transplanted into the mice was the aptly-named *fat-1* gene from the roundworm *Caenorhabditis elegans*, one of the most closely studied creatures in biotechnology.

Mice given this gene bred normally, the ...



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