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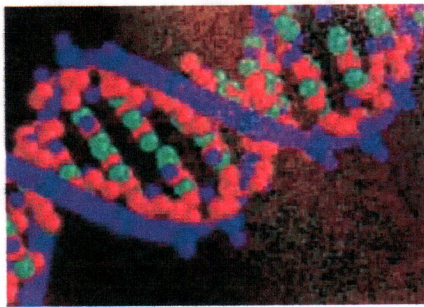
HEALTH

Mice bioengineered to be rich in omega-3

Discovery could pave way for healthier eggs, milk, meat

Wednesday, February 4, 2004 Posted: 1:13 PM EST (1813 GMT)

(AP) – Scientists say they have bioengineered a gene from a tiny worm that could lead to juicy sirloins and gooey omelets that protect your arteries, not clog them.



Mice bred with the worm gene produced "significant" amounts of a heart-friendly omega-3 fatty acid normally found in salmon and other fish that are staples of heart-healthy diets, researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital report in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature.

The researchers now are trying to breed transgenic chickens that would lay omega-3 eggs, but those results are not expected for several months. They said "the obvious followup" would be transferring the gene to livestock to see if they can produce meat and milk rich in omega-3.

"It would be little bit more difficult in a cow or pig," said the study's senior author, Jing X. Kang. "Overall, it would be quite similar and I think the outcome would be the same."

Researchers at several universities are experimenting with adding protective levels of omega-3s to foods ranging from ice cream to orange juice and salad dressing.

Breeding livestock that genetically express omega-3 would represent a radical change to America's meaty eating habits, and a potential bonanza to ranchers who have been riding a rollercoaster of high protein diets, mad

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