

Facing the challenge of COVID-19

By John Winters

Life on planet Earth has been upended by a microscopic speck.

Since a vaccine designed to immunize, or a drug hoping to cure COVID-19 are not yet available, the best advice that 21st century medicine and technology currently offer is handwashing and social distancing. These steps are, in fact, very effective in reducing disease, yet we can do more than merely wait for an uncertain solution. Past experience has taught us that basic measures, including sanitation, good nutrition and personal hygiene are the most important tools in preventing the spread of a pandemic. We can build on this knowledge to help our bodies do what they are designed to do — address challenges and remain healthy.

Viruses are sub-microscopic specks of genetic information, found everywhere life exists. Viruses infect everything: people, animals, plants and even other microbes. They constantly change, or mutate,

to improve their chances of survival. Viruses are biological ninjas; they are merely stealthy packets of genetic information that require living cells to do their work. Viruses invade cells and take over the machinery, commanding the cell to make more viruses, all while hiding inside the cell where the immune system can't detect them. Yet over 99% of the million known viral strains are harmless to people, and some are even beneficial. Viruses and other microbes have co-existed with humans for millions of years.

The human body was made to survive viral challenge; your own body has endured countless invasions from viruses, bacteria and other microbes in its lifetime. The new coronavirus is merely the latest variation. We are swimming in a sea of microbes; they are all around us, on our skin and in our guts. This is business as usual for the body!

Healthy cells are much more resistant to disease than distressed cells, and many avenues exist to improve cells' inborn immune defenses. Circulation of the blood and lymphatic systems deliver

immune factors and nutrients to cells, while removing wastes and toxins.

Help your circulatory system do its job through staying well-hydrated (drink half your body weight in ounces of water daily), deep breathing, movement, stretching and ending hot showers with a cold rinse.

Regular physical exertion improves immunity, while also stabilizing energy, moods, blood sugar, and hormone levels. Fresh whole foods (versus packaged) provide vitamins (especially vitamin D), minerals and other nutrients required for efficient immune function.

Fresh air, full sunlight, clean water, plenty of sleep, and good mental health are all key to stronger defenses.

Medicinal plants are another avenue to explore to enhance immune function; some that have been successfully used for centuries are garlic, licorice, echinacea, curcumin and ginseng. These are but a few examples of plants that fight viral infection, pneumonia and inflammation directly and indirectly.

Remember, the main variables which determine

whether or not illness occurs are the strength of the "pathogen" (i.e. COVID) versus the strength of the "host" (your name here). Now is a good time to strengthen the host.

Getting sick is a test for the body. Every day, we are exposed to many challenges to our health: viruses, poor sleep, stress, inactivity, other people, moods, etc. A healthy mind and body will get stronger with each new challenge, so long as the challenge is not too great.

For example, moderate exercise may be tiring, but eventually makes you stronger. Learning a new skill is challenging, but can be rewarding. Likewise, your immune system gets smarter and stronger when it overcomes an illness. The key is to help it win.

Improve your resistance by improving your health, and feel better every day doing it. Take good care of yourself in every way you can.

John Winters, ND, is a naturopathic physician who recently retired after operating a practice in La Grande since 1992.

Irrational fear over 'murder hornets' threatens millions of beneficial bugs

By Jeanette Marantos

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — People, get a grip. Yes, the Asian giant hornet, now famously known as the "murder hornet," is one huge scary wasp, capable of decimating an entire colony of honeybees and savagely stinging and possibly killing humans who get in their way.

But since early this month, when it was reported that two hornets were spotted for the first time in Washington state, the national panic has led to the needless slaughter of native wasps and bees, beneficial insects whose populations are already threatened, said Doug Yanega, senior museum scientist for the Department of Entomology at UC Riverside.

(Bees, for one, are the planet's pollinators-in-chief, pollinating approximately 75% of the fruits, nuts and vegetables grown in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

"Millions and millions of innocent native insects are going to die as a result of this," Yanega said. "Folks in China, Korea and Japan have lived side by side with these hornets for hundreds of years, and it has not caused the collapse of human society there. My colleagues in Japan, China

and Korea are just rolling their eyes in disbelief at what kind of snowflakes we are."

The worries started on May 2, after the New York Times reported that a beekeeper in Custer, Washington, found an entire hive of bees destroyed in November 2019, their heads ripped from their bodies. Then two Asian giant hornets were found near Blaine, just a few miles north, near the U.S.-Canadian border.

One of the hornets was found dead on a porch. The other reportedly flew away into the woods, Yanega said, and since then Washington entomologists have been on the lookout, encouraging residents to set out traps for the hornets so authorities can find and destroy any nests before they can grow.

Queens are the biggest of the world's biggest hornets. They can grow to 2 inches from their cartoonish Spider-Man-type face (with vicious mandibles) to their quarter-inch-long stinger that can puncture heavy clothing. They hibernate, Yanega said, so scientists speculate that at least two hornet queens hitched a ride to the New World on a cargo ship, the first time it's known to have happened "in over a century of significant maritime commerce

between Vancouver and Southeast Asia."

Asian giant hornets are native to Southeast Asia, Yanega said, so finding a knob of them at the western point of the Washington-British Columbia border was reason for alarm. A nest had been discovered and destroyed earlier that fall in Nanaimo on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, around 80 miles from Blaine, Washington, but genetic tests showed that the dead hornet found on the porch was not related to the colony destroyed in Nanaimo, Yanega said.

In the meantime, freaked-out people across the U.S. have started putting out traps, Yanega said.

Unfortunately, the bait in those traps can be attractive to all kinds of native insects, Yanega said, and so far, that's all people have been catching.

Considering the nuisance they can be at picnics and other outdoor events, some people might not fret about killing bees or wasps, giant or not, "but they are significant beneficial insects," Yanega said. "They eat several times their weight in caterpillars from people's vegetable gardens and ornamental plants, so indiscriminately killing them does much more harm than good."

TACOS

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VEGETABLE TACO

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer

Vegetable oil spray

½ cup sliced red onion

1 cup frozen corn

kernels, defrosted

1 cup reduced-sodium

canned black beans

rinsed and drained

½ cup mild salsa

2, 8-inch lite whole

wheat tortillas

½ cup reduced-fat shredded

sharp Cheddar cheese

¼ cup reduced-fat sour cream

Heat a medium-size nonstick skillet over medium-high heat and spray with vegetable oil spray. Sauté onion for one minute. Add the corn, beans and salsa and continue to sauté 2 to 3 minutes to warm the ingredients. Divide in two and place in center of each tortilla. Sprinkle the cheese on top and add the sour cream. Fold in half.

The whole wheat tortillas are soft enough to fold. If using other tortillas, wrap them in paper towels and microwave 20 seconds.

Yield 2 servings.

Per serving: 391 calories (25% from fat), 10.8 g fat (4.3 g saturated, 4.2 g monounsaturated), 18 mg

cholesterol, 22.2 g protein, 59.5 g carbohydrates, 17.2 g fiber, 904 mg sodium.

SLICED AVOCADO SALAD

Recipe by Linda Gassenheimer

2 small avocados to

make 1 cup sliced

2 cups shredded lettuce

2 tablespoons reduced fat

oil and vinegar dressing

Cut the avocado in half. Re-

move the pit and carefully peel the skin. Place the avocado cut side down and slice. Divide the lettuce between 2 dinner plates. Place avocado slices on top of the lettuce. Drizzle dressing over the avocado slices.

Yield 2 servings.

Per serving: 136 calories

(78% from fat), 11.8 g

fat (1.6 g saturated, 7.5 g

monounsaturated), 1 mg

cholesterol, 2.1 g protein, 8.5 g

carbohydrates, 5.9 g fiber, 13

mg sodium.

NEWSMAN

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I loved that beat and joined Forest Service personnel inaugurating a stretch of the Pacific Crest Trail in the Diamond Peak Wilderness. I remember clear, icy water coming down in a small stream from that nearly perfect symmetrical snow-capped mountain. It was about 15 miles but was great because the Forest Service did all the work. All I did was walk.

When I got back to Bend the next day, I found out I had been offered a job with the AP. Not as a sports writer. That would come later.

One morning in my early days in Portland, we received a report that someone was shooting from the top of the Holiday Inn into rush hour traffic. I climbed in to my brand new 1975 Celica (a sweet hatchback with detailed striping) and headed toward the hotel.

I expected to come to a police barricade and just wait out the situation.

But I drove right to the hotel, parked in front and figured it was either over or a false alarm.

Then I heard the "blam, blam, blam" from the roof. I hurried toward the lobby but it was locked. Someone let me in and I joined 15 or 20 others who were trapped in the hotel.

I ventured up to the top floor, where I encountered the only police officer in the building. One gunman vs. one policeman seemed like a bad ratio, and I returned to the lobby.

After what seemed like hours, a special police unit led by a Serpico-looking character arrived and took the gunman down. No one was seriously hurt.

I had been a sitting duck, but it turned out he was shooting only at police. One officer was struck but was wearing a bullet-proof vest.

You never knew when a big story would hit.

On Dec. 28, 1978, I was driving down Sandy Boulevard on my way to the Far West Classic basketball tournament when the street lights blinked simultaneously. A moment later, there was a bulletin on the radio about a plane crash in east Portland.

I stopped at a phone booth (this was long before cell-phones) and called the Portland bureau. An old-time wire service colleague, answered and said, "It's a big one, you better get out there."

There was a stream of ambulances headed toward the crash scene. I finally arrived and talked my way into place where United Flight 173 slammed into two vacant houses.

The aircraft, bathed in light, was still mostly intact.

Amazingly, only 10 of the 185 on board died.

I went to the house of a woman whose home was narrowly missed. The crash took out her dog run. And her phone was broken because so many people had come to ask to use it.

The plane, I reported a day later, appeared to have run out of fuel as the pilot dealt with a landing gear issue. The absence of fuel explained the lack of any fire.

"It was a miracle," Richard Harrison, one of the survivors said. "I didn't know people live through plane crashes."

So in between covering the exploits of the Beavers, Ducks and Trail Blazers, I had plenty of excitement as a news reporter. It was a job rewarding and challenging.

I have more stories to bore you with. I'll save them for another time.

But know this: Journalism is an honorable profession. Every person I worked with was only interested in getting at the truth.

Working on the news side made me a better sports writer.

Actually a better writer — period.

Bob Baum, who grew up in Union, retired last year after 43 years with The Associated Press, the first 23 in Portland and the last 20 as senior sports writer based in Phoenix, Arizona. He covered 10 Olympics, seven summer and three winter. He lives in Island City with his wife Leah, their two dogs and four cats.

GARDEN

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- Try washing them off the rose bushes with a strong stream of water.

Garden chores

- Herbs planted in average soil don't need fertilization. Too much fertilizer reduces flavor and pungency at harvest.

- Sow seeds of sunflowers and zinnias.

- Place stakes by seeds of squash and cucumbers and melons when planting in hills. You'll know where to water after the vines start running.

- Cucumbers, squash and melon seeds can be planted next to (and then trained to climb on) a trellis or fence.

If you have garden questions or comments please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

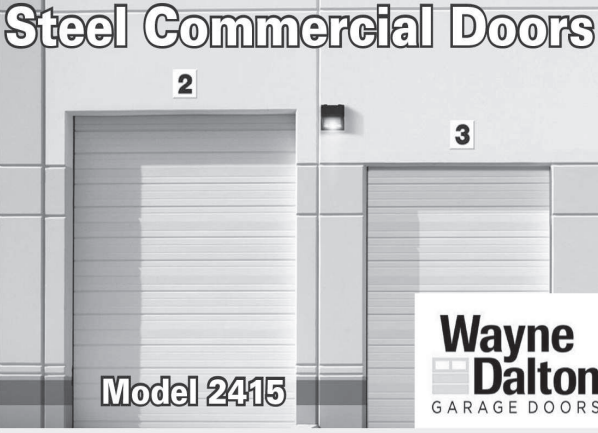
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