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Evening News

Wed 14 Nov 2007

Bacteria 'liars and cheats but loyal to their own family'

THE benefits of "friendly" bacteria are well documented - but now scientists have discovered that some bacteria are "liars and cheats".

New research shows that bacteria deceive others for their own benefit but will co-operate for the good of their family.

The researchers at the Universities of Edinburgh and Nottingham have found that bacteria can cheat their way out of responsibility and avoid contributing to group efforts as a whole.

The cheating bacteria fails to contribute to the group, all the while saving its resources and benefiting from the efforts of others. But the research, in the journal Nature, also shows that bacteria, like animals, tend not to cheat when dealing with relatives.

This is believed to be because co-operation with kin helps promote their family DNA.

Scientists believe the research will help develop an understanding in how infections spread and how diseases evolve.

Stu West, of the university's School of Biological Sciences, said: "Bacteria can behave selfishly within their social circle.

"They cheat and lie to take advantage of others - but they also show loyalty to relatives."

This article: <http://news.scotsman.com/education.cfm?id=1802642007>

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Comments

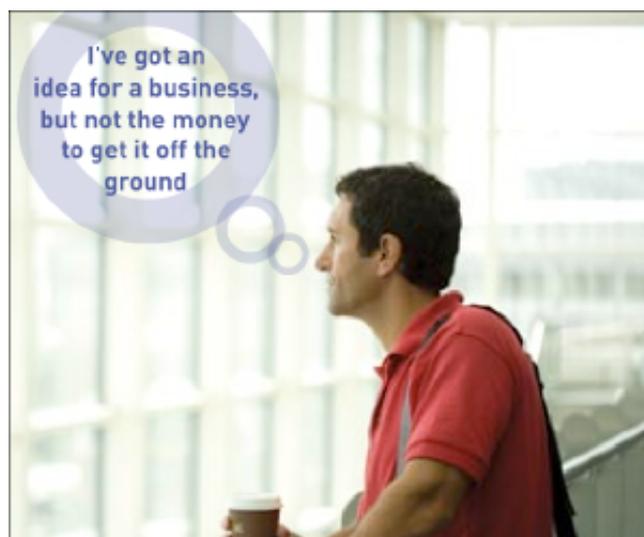
Want to read yourself in print? Every day the Evening News publishes a selection of online comments on the letters page of the paper. Pick up a copy to see if your views have been published.

1. **Cynicaltalk**, E Lothian / 12:28pm 14 Nov 2007

SNP = Bacteria.

2. **Grumpy** / 4:18pm 14 Nov 2007

(1) - You got it right!



3. Alternative (High Octane) Fuel Head, Edinburgh / 5:37pm 14 Nov 2007

What a stupid headline.

4. Paula / 5:56pm 14 Nov 2007

So in theory then I can call my ex bacteria and I would be right!

5. Sassenach Observer, Edinburgh / 6:22pm 14 Nov 2007

Sounds like just the stuff for a soap - or maybe not.

6. Kaza, Dubai, UAE / 11:39am 15 Nov 2007

#1 I like it...very funny

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