# Supplement labels and contents not always the same

**By Anahad O'Connor, New York Times**

Americans spend an estimated $5 billion a year on unproven herbal supplements that promise everything from fighting off colds to curbing hot flashes and boosting memory. But now there is a new reason for supplement buyers to beware: DNA tests show that many pills labeled as healing herbs are little more than powdered rice and weeds.

Using a test called DNA barcoding, a kind of genetic fingerprinting that has also been used to help uncover labeling fraud in the commercial seafood industry, Canadian researchers tested 44 bottles of popular supplements sold by 12 companies. They found that many were not what they claimed to be, and that pills labeled as popular herbs were often diluted – or replaced entirely – by cheap fillers like soybean, wheat and rice.

Consumer advocates and scientists say the research provides more evidence that the herbal supplement industry is riddled with questionable practices. Industry representatives argue that any problems are not widespread.

For the study, the researchers selected popular medicinal herbs, and then randomly bought different brands of those products from stores and outlets in Canada and the United States. To avoid singling out any company, they did not disclose any product names.

Among their findings were bottles of echinacea supplements, used by millions of Americans to prevent and treat colds, that contained ground up bitter weed, Parthenium hysterophorus, an invasive plant found in India and Australia that has been linked to rashes, nausea and flatulence.

**Read the whole story**

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# Incline resident found guilty of armed robbery

Jorge Miranda-Rivas will be going to prison for at least seven years for the armed robbery at the Chevron in Incline Village.

The sentence of seven to 23 years was handed down Nov. 7 in the Second Judicial District Court after Miranda-Rivas was found guilty on one count each of robbery with a deadly weapon, discharging a weapon from within a structure, assault with a deadly weapon and grand larceny of an automobile.

The Incline Village man robbed the station the night of Jan. 2. According to investigators, he entered the Chevron wearing a face mask, demanded money from the clerk, discharged a revolver inside the store and fled with an undisclosed amount of cash.

Also charged in the crime are two juveniles and Jorge Torres. Torres was arrested in June.

*– Lake Tahoe News staff report*

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# Are vets using too may

# antibiotics on farms?

**By Dan Charles, NPR**

In a barn outside Manhattan, Kansas, researchers from Kansas State University are trying to solve the riddle of bovine respiratory disease. They're sticking plastic rods down the noses of 6-month-old calves, collecting samples of bacteria.

"This bacteria, Mannheimia haemolytica, lives in most cattle," explains Mike Apley, one of the research leaders. Sometimes, for reasons that aren't well understood, those bacteria make cattle sick. When that happens, or when it just seems likely to happen, cattlemen deploy antibiotics.

Apley hopes to find out, among other things, whether those antibiotics actually work as advertised. If they don't, he says, it's an easy decision to not use them. Farmers save money and meat industry critics, who want farmers to use fewer antibiotics, are happy, too. "It's a win-win for everyone."

These pigs, newly weaned from their mothers, are at their most vulnerable stage of life. They're getting antibiotics in their water to ward off bacterial infection.

Piglets in a pen on a hog farm in Frankenstein, Mo.

Unfortunately, when it comes to antibiotics on the farm, it's not always a win-win. And when there's a fight, veterinarians are right in the middle of it, pushed back and forth by conflicting loyalties.

**Read the whole story**

# S. Tahoe making dent in unfunded liabilities

**By Kathryn Reed**

South Lake Tahoe's unfunded liability for health care was dramatically decreased by having retirees join Medicare. If they all go this route, the figure will drop even more.

Before the change was implemented earlier this year, the city was on the hook for $52 million. That amount would have to be paid if the city closed its doors today. In actuality there will always be a balance due. But it can be lowered if the city sets money aside for the future and implements changes to the program.

That $52 million becomes $37 million when all retirees who are 65 and older switch to Medicare. This is a program City Manager Nancy Kerry implemented.

John Bartel, president of Bartel Associates, gave a presentation to the City Council on Nov. 5 about where the city stands with its health care and pension obligations. He took a more conservative approach. There could be another $7.5 million reduction depending on what plan the retirees choose.

Changes have been implemented throughout the years to trim retiree health benefits. There was a time when the city worker and that person's family could be on the plan forever – even after the employee died.

Employees heard the numbers at a mandatory meeting Nov. 6.

Depending on which medical program employees enroll in, there could be an annual cost savings to the general fund of $300,000. This is money the residents could see reinvested in the community.

Reasons public entities are caring more about unfunded liability is that under a new government accounting standard all unfunded liability has to be accounted for. It could affect the ability to borrow money or issue debt through a bond because it is now a debt on the books.

City staff is in talks with employee groups about potential changes to the health care plan. It had been hoped the Affordable Care Act would have played a roll, but it does not allow an employer to pay part of the fees.

“Every city that is in bankruptcy is in bankruptcy because of benefits problems. You have to stop the runaway train,” Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

In total, the city has 140 retirees it is responsible for when it comes to funding pension and health care benefits. This doesn’t include their dependents on the health program.

On the pension side, the liability is $53.6 million.

“The bulk of your liability rests with the people not providing services,” Bartel said of the Public Employee Retirement System, or the state pension fund.

Public employees are guaranteed a defined paycheck when they retire no matter how well the money was invested by PERS officials and what the return is. That is why public entities have to keep paying more. The pension is a lifetime commitment and investments don’t always go up.

The city’s hands are tied when it comes to making changes to PERS. The state Legislature controls the rulebook. That means cops and firefighters can keep retiring at age 50, and all other employees at 55.

Cities across the country are dealing with this issue of unfunded liabilities. The *Wall Street Journal* launched a series looking at the fiscal health of the country’s 250

largest cities.

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# Opinion: Ocean drowning in plastic

**By Mark Gold and Cara Horowitz**

You've probably seen the images of dolphins caught in abandoned monofilament fishing nets, or of vast areas of plastic trash floating in remote waters of the Pacific, or of sea turtles consuming plastic bags that look remarkably like one of their favorite foods: jellyfish. Or perhaps, after a rainstorm, you've walked on a beach that resembled a landfill. Some 20 million tons of plastic pollution enters the oceans each year, and it's devastating the marine environment.

Plastic litter is also costly. On the West Coast alone, according to a recent EPA study, the cost of cleaning up marine litter comes to more than $13 per person per year. And because plastic typically does not degrade in the ocean, today's pollution will be a problem for many generations to come.

Locally, there have been some success stories. Thanks to state and federal environmental requirements, the Los Angeles region has installed screens on more than 50,000 storm water basins, as well as inserts that keep all but the smallest plastic pollution out of local rivers, beaches and bays. Additionally, bans on single-use plastic bags in a number of local jurisdictions have reduced plastic bag use by tens of millions of bags annually. And West Hollywood, Manhattan Beach, Santa

Monica and Malibu have banned single-use foam food packaging. All of these measures have meant less plastic ending up in the ocean locally.

Statewide, legislation to ban plastic bags has failed numerous times due to successful lobbying efforts from plastic bag manufacturers and others, but nevertheless, more than 10 million Californians live in cities that have banned the bag. The State Water Resources Control Board will soon release a statewide trash policy that builds on the Los Angeles area's successful trash control measures.

**Read the whole story**

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# Introverts, extroverts each contribute something

**By Mandy Kendall**

There are a lot of connotations to being extrovert or introvert. Most people would characterize an extrovert as "life and soul of the party'", very friendly and maybe a bit loud. Whereas introverts are often described as "shy, timid, softly spoken and not really into socializing much at all."

One dictionary definition of introvert describes them as a "shy, reticent, and typically self-centered person", with extrovert being defined as "an outgoing, overtly expressive person."

However, according to personality experts, being confident or shy has nothing to do with being extrovert or introvert. You

can be confident and be an introvert, or shy and an extrovert. Who knew?



Mandy Kendall

Although those definitions may be true in the extremes, just as there are many layers to personality types, there are layers to being extrovert and introvert. As with most things, there is a spectrum and some people may be more introverted than others or more extroverted than others. Indeed there are ambiverts, having the best of both worlds by being in the middle of the spectrum, described as “moderately comfortable with groups and social interaction, but also relishes time alone, away from a crowd. “

Take me for example, I’d like to think that I am an ambivert but with some research I discovered that I definitely fit into the introvert mold more than the extrovert model.

Kate Bartolotta, owner and founder of Be You Media Group, uses a cup analogy to help explain some of the basic differences. She says to think of ourselves as having a cup of energy available to us. Most of us love social interactions, being with friends and family and being around people. Introverts will tend to find that their cup of energy is depleted over time being around people and need to have some time alone to replenish their cup, whereas extroverts find that socializing fills their cup. Another way of looking at it is to think about how you respond to stimulation, social or otherwise. Extroverts tend to crave stimulation to help them feel alive and energized, whereas introverts tend to find they are at

their best in calmer environments.

Bartolotta also suggested this 12-question quiz to find out just where you are on the introvert/extrovert scale.

With one third to half of the population being introverted, but society forcing us to conform to social expectations, it's easy to see how a lot of people may well be living lives that just aren't good for them, or those around them. It might seem these days that in order to survive or be accepted we all have to be gregarious and charismatic. But we need the balance of the contribution that introverts and extroverts give to society. Try not to be persuaded to fit in with social convention and just be who you really are.

***Qwik-e* tips on dealing with introversion**

**Be honest** – with yourself, family, friends and co-workers. Forcing yourself to be sociable when you really don't feel like it is not going to help you, or anyone have a good time. Tell those close to you that sometimes you just need some alone-time so that you can be at your best when you are with them. Let co-workers know that you need some quiet time to get your work done or be creative. You might be surprised how many people feel the same way too. Make sure you are not doing things a certain way because you feel that is what is expected of you.

**Think about those around you** – Do you know someone who seems fine one minute, then quiet or moody the next? Maybe they struggle with keeping up with your social circle interactions and need to withdraw occasionally. Allow them some space and just ask them what they like to do to recharge their batteries, you may be surprised by what you hear.

**No excuses** – Don't feel like you have to make excuses for not joining every event. No one really expects more than just a "sorry I can't make that". You can be honest with close friends and family and tell them you need some recharging

time, but generally social acquaintances don’t need to be told why you’re not joining them.

**Let your emotions be your guide** – Think about where and when you feel your best (home reading a book, at a quiet dinner with a few friends, at a rock concert or large parties) and let that help you decide how you are going to spend your spare time.

This TEDx talk gives a very good overview of introversion versus extroversion.

Until next time.

*Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.*

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# Phone scam targeting N. Nevadans

Scam artists are calling people in Northern Nevada claiming they are with the Professional Firefighters of Nevada, and then are asking people to send money.

This group does not solicit money via telephone.

The group does have a coats for kids campaign going on now and also does a boot drive for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

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# Boots are the key to better skiing

**By Larry Olmsted, Forbes**

I can’t say this clearly enough: there is nothing you can do to instantly improve your skiing as much as getting a pair of perfectly fitted boots. And for most skiers, that means custom.

So if you have an avid skier on your holiday list, look no further than the gift of custom ski boots, a gift that will keep giving back for many years to come.

I’ve written about this here at Forbes.com before in much more detail, but the long and short of it is that perfectly fit ski boots have four immediate and very tangible benefits: they are more comfortable, as result of better fit they are warmer and best of all they make you a better skier. This combination of increased comfort and warmth coupled with skiing that requires less energy adds up to the fourth benefit, a longer ski day with less fatigue.

The science is simple – to turn a ski you apply pressure to the edges, and today’s highly responsive shaped skis are edgier and “easier” to carve than ever, but this is a double edged sword. The problem is that few people have “average” or neutral feet and most have low or high arches. Anyone in these groups is putting pressure on the edge of their skis – usually in opposite directions – all the time without knowing it.

If your feet pronate (lean in) as most do, you are constantly turning your skis towards each other. Your body and mind intuitively understand and adjust, using a lot of leg muscles, so you are fighting yourself and your turns all day long while burning out your legs. Get correctly fit with boots that puts you in a neutral stance and voila, it’s easier to turn with much less effort.

Many people are amazed the first time they ski in such boots, like a weight has been lifted from their shoulders. The beauty is this happens regardless of ability and everyone from a beginner to expert can enjoy the instant benefits of better fit.

**Read the whole story**

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# Tiny bird may no longer be federally protected

**By Michael Doyle, McClatchy**

WASHINGTON — An unassuming bird that’s rebounded in California’s remote Inyo County is giving conservatives and environmentalists alike something to crow about.

The Sacramento-based Pacific Legal Foundation gets to claim victory, with the Fish and Wildlife Service’s new proposal to remove the Inyo California towhee from federal protection. The conservative advocacy group sued to force action.

But in a rare win-win for the perennially embattled Endangered Species Act, environmentalists are likewise pleased with the Fish and Wildlife Service’s proposal. The towhee’s revival,

they say, shows the 1973 law can still work.

“The recovery of the towhee and its spring habitats is cause for celebration and provides yet another example of the success of our most important law for saving wildlife,” declared Tierra Curry, a biologist at the Center for Biological Diversity.

Only 30 other species, including the bald eagle, have been delisted from the Endangered Species Act because their populations have recovered. More than 1,500 U.S. species remain listed, including more than 300 currently found in California.

**Read the whole story**

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# Trails affected by American Fire being rehabbed

U.S. Forest Service personnel are working on the trails affected by the American Fire.

The Western States Trail between Michigan Bluff and Deadwood Cemetery is open, and Loop 6 is open west of Deadwood Ridge Road.

The entire fire area, including all roads and trails, is closed until May 1, 2014. Therefore, the WST and Loop 6 within the fire area east of Deadwood Ridge Road remain closed. These trails will be returned to acceptable standards before being considered safe for recreationists.

The American Fire affected approximately 25 miles of the WST. To date, roughly 18 of those miles have undergone rehabilitation through fire suppression and/or burned area emergency rehabilitation efforts.

Efforts are under way to winterize the remaining seven-mile segment to minimize erosion and stabilize trail tread. This segment is on the National Register of Historic Places between Last Chance and Deadwood and crosses the North Fork of the Middle Fork of the American River canyon.

Two fire-damaged trail bridges lie within the canyon. The smaller bridge, near Last Chance, has burned timber needing replacement. The larger swinging bridge that crosses the river needs further structural assessments before determining if it can be repaired.

Although winterization activities have started on the approximately three miles of Loop 6 affected by the fire, further work is needed before the trail will be useable.

In the coming months, Tahoe National Forest officials will work with the Western States Trail and the Western States Endurance Run foundations and other interested individuals and groups to repair and maintain the fire-impacted trails. In the meantime, the area remains closed in the interest of public safety.

Officials welcome anyone who is interested in helping with trail work. Potential volunteers may call (530) 367.2224 between 8am-4:30pm weekdays.