

Health officials say that 75 percent of the recently emerging infectious diseases affecting humans — diseases ranging from West Nile virus to AIDS — come from animals.



Dr. Cathy Lund gives Oreo a checkup. Sheila Braddock, of Providence, brought her cat in to be dewormed. Dr. Lund helped plan a conference in Providence last week on diseases passed from animals to humans.

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / STEVE SZYDLOWSKI

Judges get more sway in sentences

In two rulings on drug cases, the Supreme Court grants judges new discretion to stray from federal sentencing guidelines, delighting civil-rights advocates.

BY JAMES OLIPHANT
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court yesterday gave federal judges greater flexibility in sentencing offenders, especially those convicted of dealing crack cocaine.

In a pair of decisions, the court held that judges may hand down more lenient sentences than those called for by the federal sentencing guidelines enacted by Congress. Among other things, those guidelines call for heavier penalties for distributing crack cocaine than for powder cocaine.

Together, they give judges tools to loosen the grip mandatory minimum sentences have had on the criminal justice system, the tough-on-crime policies that critics say have stuffed the nation's jails with low-level violators.

The decisions, both of which delighted civil-rights groups, also illustrate why making

SEE **SENTENCING, A4**

Gore puts burden on U.S., China

The world's climate-change ambassador, receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, urges the world's primary polluters to break their stalemate and take action against global warming.

BY MARY JORDAN
THE WASHINGTON POST

OSLO, Norway — Former Vice President Al Gore accepted his Nobel Peace Prize yesterday and called on the United States and China, the world's two largest polluters, "to make the boldest moves" on climate change "or stand accountable before history for their failure to act."

"Both countries should stop using each other's behavior as an excuse for stalemate," Gore said, calling the threat from rising temperatures and

SEE **GORE, A5**

Icy morning sends scores to local hospitals

BY LYNN ARDITI
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Icy sidewalks and driveways proved treacherous for people of all ages yesterday, landing scores of people in hospital emergency rooms around Rhode Island.

Weather forecasters predict more rain and sleet later today.

In Providence, rescue workers helped 23 people who slipped and fell during a six-hour stretch, including two with broken legs, three with broken wrists and two with broken ankles, said Providence Fire Department spokesman James Taylor. "The youngest was 12 years old," Taylor said, "and the oldest was 87 years old."

About 18 pregnant women lost their footing

SEE **ICE, A6**

The beastly side of pets

BY PETER B. LORD
JOURNAL ENVIRONMENT WRITER

Our pets scratch and bite us. They leave worms, protozoan cysts and ticks in our yards. They expose us to a fearsome range of infections.

And many of us respond by having more pets than ever.

What's more, many of us are picking up our pets and moving to rural communities, where we, and our pets, are infected with even more diseases transmitted by wildlife.

Diseases spread by animals are called zoonotic diseases, and they comprise most of the serious diseases that have emerged in the last 25 years.

When the dog bites

More than 1,000 people reported being bitten by animals in Rhode Island in the first 11 months of the year, and 212 of them received rabies vaccine.

dogs	553	horses	10	skunks	7
cats	223	squirrels	10	rabbits	3
bats	159	rats	9	ferrets	2
raccoons	21	mice	8	guinea pig	1

Source: R.I. Department of Health

— **projo.com** —

Your turn: Are you concerned about catching something from a pet? To respond, go to **projo.com**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control says that 75 percent of the recently emerging infectious diseases affecting humans — diseases ranging from West Nile virus to AIDS — are of animal origin.

Such diseases are of such concern to local veterinarians and medical doctors that more than 200 of them from Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island met with a panel of national experts for a conference in Providence last week. The gathering was described as a first for Rhode Island, and possibly the country.

"Pets, People, & Pathogens — Be a Victor,

SEE **PETS, A8**

Injured worker heads home as claim proceeds

BY KAREN LEE ZINER
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Edgar Velásquez left for the Mexican highlands yesterday with praise for his courage and blessings for his journey.

Velásquez departed as lawyers were still trying to settle a claim against his former employer, a tree-service owner who hired the 22-year-old illegal immigrant, then turned his back after Velásquez accidentally slashed his face open with a chainsaw.

Velásquez's lawyers allege that William J. Gorman Jr. arranged to have Velásquez deported last year before he could pursue a workers' compensation claim against Gorman, owner of Billy

SEE **WORKER, A6**

Church guard: Armed, prayerful

"Holy Spirit, be with me," the woman recalls saying as she pointed her gun at shooter Matthew Murray, 24, who police say also killed two people at a youth mission in Colorado.

BY JUDITH KOHLER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Jeanne Assam said her hands were steady as she aimed her gun and fired repeatedly at the young man who was shooting a high-powered rifle in the crowded foyer of her church.

And she prayed for divine guidance. "I was given the assignment to end this before it got too much worse," she told reporters yesterday, a day after police say the same man killed four people at the New Life Church and a missionary training school 65 miles away in a Denver suburb.

"I just said, 'Holy Spirit, be with me.' My hands weren't even shaking" said Assam, a congregant with a concealed-weapons permit and a law-enforcement background who was acting as a security guard Sunday.

Police say Matthew Murray, 24, may have died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound instead of any shots fired by Assam. Still, police and church leaders credited her bravery with averting a

SEE **CHURCH, A9**



AP / DAVID ZALUBOWSKI

Jeanne Assam, who shot the gunman at New Life Church in Colorado Springs on Sunday, is being credited with averting a greater tragedy.



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RIPTA BUS TRAGEDY

A 57-year-old man who wasn't allowed onto a RIPTA bus headed from Pawtucket to Providence because he appeared to be drunk is fatally injured when he falls under a rear wheel of the bus as it pulls away. **B1**

FAA REJECTS SHORTER RUNWAY

The Federal Aviation Administration says Warwick Mayor Scott Avedisian's proposal to cut 400 feet from a planned runway extension at T.F. Green Airport would needlessly restrict passenger numbers on the cross-country flights the airport is trying to attract. **E1**

HEADY DAYS FOR RAMS

How impressive was URI's win in Syracuse on Saturday night? It may have been Rhode's biggest regular-season win since it beat San Francisco and its All-American center, Bill Cartwright, on the road on Dec. 23, 1977. **C1**

