



## MEDICAL RESEARCH

### Potential antidote to world's deadliest mushroom

Scientists believe they have found a potential antidote for a potent toxin found in the world's most poisonous mushroom, the death cap. *Amanita phalloides* is responsible for about 90% of mushroom-related deaths.

Chinese and Australian researchers have identified that indocyanine green, a dye used in medical imaging, appears to block the toxic effects of  $\alpha$ -Amanitin, the death cap's principal toxin. In tests in mice as well as human cell lines in the lab, scientists found indocyanine green was able to prevent liver and kidney damage induced by  $\alpha$ -Amanitin. It also improved the probability of survival after poisoning. The research was published in the journal *Nature Communications*.

European Congress on Obesity, suggests those who gained at least half a kilogram a year from 17 to 60 had a 10% greater risk of aggressive prostate cancer and a 29% greater risk of fatal prostate cancer. Gaining weight more steeply presents a similar risk.

The findings, which are yet to be peer reviewed, were part of the Obesity and Disease Development Sweden study from 1963 to 2014.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

### First records of kissing may date back 4,500 years

Humanity's earliest record of kissing dates back about 4,500 years in the ancient Middle East, 1,000 years earlier than previously thought, according to researchers.

Scientists have highlighted evidence that suggests kissing was practised in some of the earliest Mesopotamian societies and documented in ancient texts from 2500BC that have been largely overlooked. In an article published in the journal *Science*, researchers also cited evidence that kissing may have contributed to the spread of orally transmitted diseases such as cold sores. A previous hypothesis suggested the earliest evidence of kissing came from what would be modern-day India in 1500BC.

## VACCINES

### Bird flu vaccine for condors given green light

A new vaccine has been granted emergency approval to protect California condors from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, a virus that has been described as "highly contagious", US federal officials announced. The emergency action underscores an outbreak that has alarmed the conservation community, which fears condors could be dealt a devastating blow. After first being detected in a dead condor in March, the illness has swept through the small flock of birds. So far 21 condors have died.

◀ The death cap, or *amanita phalloides*, contains a type of amatoxin that causes liver and kidney failure, to which there is no known antidote

ROGER PHILLIPS/ALAMY



# 80

The percentage of global plastic pollution that could be cut by 2040 through removing excessive packaging, reuse and recycling, according to the UN Environment Programme

## Global report United Kingdom

### CONSERVATIVES

### Official knew of minister's alleged speeding request

The most senior civil servant in the Home Office was made aware of allegations that Suella Braverman wanted civil service help in dealing with a speeding fine, the Guardian understands.

The development raises questions about how many other senior officials and ministers across Whitehall were then informed about the claims, and puts pressure on the prime minister to order an investigation into the allegations.

Matthew Rycroft, the department's permanent secretary, was told about the home secretary's alleged request to set up a private driving awareness course in the autumn, informed sources said.

Braverman had made the request to another senior civil servant who "had concerns about whether it was appropriate", it is understood, so had reported it to the top official.

The home secretary insisted she had done "nothing untoward" as she battled to save her job. She admitted speeding, and said she had paid a fine and taken penalty points on her licence, but did not deny asking officials for help.

Her team suggested she did not instruct officials to arrange a course, but merely asked for their advice. That has been disputed by sources elsewhere in government.

Rishi Sunak was still considering early this week whether to order an investigation into allegations Braverman breached the ministerial code by asking officials to assist with a private matter. He confirmed he had spoken to his ethics adviser, Sir Laurie Magnus, over the issue.



## CANCER

### Weight gain linked to raised risk of prostate cancer death

Men who put on 12.7kg before turning 30 are 27% more likely to die from prostate cancer in old age than those who maintain their teenage weight, early research suggests.

A decades-long study into more than 250,000 Swedish men indicated there was a strong link between men gaining weight across their healthiest years and developing prostate cancer.

The analysis, presented at the