Researchers have developed a rule of thumb to help stop lion populations declining at the hands of trophyhunters. They are urging hunters to kill only males with dark noses. A lion's nose is speckled with dark pigment, and these freckles become more pronounced with age, says Craig Packer of the University of Minnesota at Saint Paul, who led the study in Nature. Removing only old males whose noses are at least 50% dappled would give cubs a better chance of survival.

The fumes from stools could help doctors diagnose diarrhoea in an hour. A new method uses the distinctive gases to identify the infectious bugs. Current detection techniques can take days. A report in the journal Gut says samples are placed in a sealed vial and heated gently. "Essentially, you've got a fart in a tube," says Chris Probert, of the University of Bristol, who helped develop the test. The fumes are captured on a fibrous stick, which is fed into a machine for analysis.

A simple scheme for combating email spam has been devised by two US researchers. The technique exploits the structure of social networks to determine whether a message is from a friend or a spammer. It works for only about half of all emails received, but in all those cases it sorts the mail correctly. P Oscar Boykin and Vwani Roychowdhury, of the University of California, Los Angeles, say on the arXiv.org e-print site that their method should prove highly effective when paired with more sophisticated, but cumbersome, filtering methods.