

## Director's Note

It is a pleasure to commend Susan Duhon and Sandra Borland for their excellent supervision and maintenance of the Axolotl Colony. This past year has been a splendid one. We moved into completely renovated quarters and have been able therefore to better organize and streamline our activities. Not surprisingly, our shipments of live material have increased substantially. Both Susan and Sandra enjoy hearing from our users, so do not hesitate to communicate with them.

As mentioned in the last *Axolotl Newsletter* (Spring, 1991), we have been planning to develop several aspects of the molecular biology of the axolotl as a service to colony users. Our effort is now well under way: First, Dr. Hui Bin Sun has joined our staff and is in the process of preparing molecular markers for axolotl embryos; Second, we have begun plans for a workshop (see page 4), which will highlight the development of the axolotl as a model system for molecular biology studies; Third, we are now prepared to serve as an information/storage center for axolotl genes, markers, and probes (e.g., antibodies). Please contact Dr. Sun if you would like to share your axolotl molecular biology biologicals. We expect to make rapid progress in this area. Please begin to think of ways in which we might be of assistance and discuss them with us at the workshop or communicate them to us sooner than that. Our goal is to provide researchers with a "jump start" in axolotl molecular biology.

George M. Malacinski  
Director, I.U. Axolotl Colony

## IU Axolotl Colony Update

Sandra J. Borland  
and  
Susan T. Duhon

### IU Axolotl Colony

The Axolotl Colony moved into permanent, newly renovated quarters this past January. We have somewhat more space now, conditions are generally excellent, and we hope and expect that we will be able to meet the needs of the axolotl research community better than ever before. In spite of all the moving we did (three times in two years) and the crowded conditions we endured, we were able to supply in the season preceeding the current one (1990-1991) more embryos for research and teaching than we ever had in the past (about 46,000). This season, we have doubled that number, and the season is not over yet!

### Molecular Specialist

The Axolotl Colony, the Malacinski lab in the Biology Department, and the Neff and Mescher labs in the Medical Sciences Program here at Indiana University, are sponsoring a postdoctoral research associate expressly to assist in the development of the molecular biology of the axolotl. His name is Hui Bin "Herbert" Sun, and he arrived in May of this year. Herbert earned his Ph.D. at Norman Bethune University of Medical Sciences, Changchun, China and subsequently studied molecular oncology and developmental biology at Osaka University, Osaka, Japan and in the Institute for Molecular and Cellular Biology and the Guest Laboratory of the Max Planck Gesellschaft of the Shanghai Institute of Cell Biology, Academia Sinica, Shanghai, China. Herbert will aid us in developing the molecular biology of the axolotl by developing probes and constructing libraries useful in embryological and other studies of the axolotl. He may be contacted through the Axolotl Colony.

### Shipping Policies

Many thanks to those researchers and teachers who have provided Federal Express account numbers. This year's volume of shipments would not have been possible if we had not been able to ship via Federal Express. We have also been receiving empty boxes and ice

packs back from everyone very promptly. Thank you very much as this also keeps things running smoothly here.

**Weekly schedule.** We ship as many embryo boxes as possible on Monday, which therefore arrive on Tuesday in most cases. We try to be as consistent as possible, but sometimes the material is just not ready to go out on Monday, so it goes out on Tuesday or Wednesday instead. We realize that it is hard to plan a week's work when you don't know when the embryos will arrive, and we apologize for the inconvenience. If you need to know a more definite time of arrival, please call the colony on Monday to confirm the likely shipping date.

**Annual axolotl vacation.** Most of you know that the colony tries to shut down breeding in July and August to give the axolotls, and us, a break. I emphasize the word 'tries,' since for the last three summers it has been clear that many of your research programs are very active during the summer. In our effort to accommodate, we ended up cutting back only about 25% in July and 50% in August in 1991. Since we want to supply your needs and since we really do need the two months off, we have decided to reschedule the 'Axolotl Vacation' for August and September this year. Records of seasonality at the Axolotl Colony suggest that the "off season" for axolotl spawns is in the fall, rather than the summer, if it exists at all (see Spawning Axolotls at IU: A Ten Year History, this issue). We also find that we have many embryo requests in July, but not so many in August and September, when people go on vacation and get started on the fall semester. Therefore, we have decided to continue to do full scale breeding through July starting this summer. Then we plan to call a full stop in August and September. Any response to this schedule from our regular customers would be greatly appreciated. We would also like everyone, even our regular customers, to reorder at the beginning of each season (September-October) in order to re-establish type, quantity, and frequency of shipments. (It's also nice just to talk to you

every once in a while!)

**Holidays.** Our holiday shipping is somewhat irregular due in part to our personal schedules, but also due to our trying to guess everyone else's holiday research schedule. We certainly do not want to send embryos to empty labs. Therefore if you receive regular shipments, please inform us of your holiday schedule and axolotl needs in advance. We will do our best to accommodate. The main holiday periods are Thanksgiving week and the weeks surrounding Christmas and New Year's Day, but don't forget other uncertain times of the year: Spring Break (yours or ours); the month of May, due to final exams and graduation ceremonies nationwide; and the July 4th weekend. We do not ship until Tuesday weeks when Monday is a federal holiday. Moreover, every once in a while we take a weekend off just because things are getting too backed up here at the colony. This usually happens after we have had several solid weeks of shipping, and we feel everyone has been getting orders filled satisfactorily. Again, we apologize for any inconvenience that results, but we literally run out of bowls to put things in and places to put them if we had them.

**Larval shipments.** We very often have extra larvae of various sizes. When this happens, we call around and see if any of our various larvae customers can use these extra larvae. Please keep in mind future needs when we call, especially if you expect to need larvae larger than three centimeters. Any time large larvae are needed, feel free to call and check in case we are overstocked. However, we do not have the space to deliberately raise more than 50 extra larvae to greater than three centimeters length and therefore will not accept orders asking us to do so. We ask researchers wanting more than 50 large larvae to make provisions to raise them from a smaller size in your own labs. We have prepared care and feeding information for send out, and we are happy to talk with anyone about the raising of larvae.