

News



Feathers fly Buzzards spar over a kill on the Marlborough Downs, Wiltshire, in an image by David White. The acclaimed wildlife and landscape photographer has an exhibition at London's Osborne Studio Gallery running until Oct 3. As well as the Downs, it includes pictures from Africa and Nepal.

Mild workout can help to combat statin side-effects

By Daily Telegraph Reporter

THE most common side-effect experienced by people taking statins could be countered by moderate exercise. Some people taking the cholesterol-lowering drug complain of muscle pain and researchers now believe they know why. A team of researchers, funded by the British Heart Foundation, found that statins cause spontaneous and irregular leaks of calcium from storage compartments within muscle cells. Most people can tolerate this leak, but in others it may overwhelm the muscle cells, causing pain and weakness. Statins are the most commonly prescribed drugs in the UK, with about eight million people taking them. Some researchers have claimed as many as one in five of those taking the drugs will suffer some kind of negative consequence, such as muscle pain. Dr Sarah Calaghan, associate professor in cardiac physiology at the University of Leeds, said: "The idea that exercise makes statin side-effects worse might be a misconception – what really matters is the intensity of exercise. We found that moderate exercise cancelled out the changes in muscle cells caused by statins. "We know around seven in 10 professional athletes can't tolerate statins and we know that intense endurance exercise has profound effects on the gatekeeper proteins targeted by statins. "The added effect of statins could push muscles over the edge, leading to symptoms." The research, which also involved Sweden's Karolinska Institute, was published in the journal *JACC: Basic to Translational Science*.

Armed Forces caught in pensions tax trap

Senior personnel face hefty bills as they are hit by reforms aimed at squeezing top earners

By Danielle Sheridan
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THOUSANDS of members of the UK Armed Forces have been trapped by a government pension reform aimed at restricting tax breaks for high earners. Some senior services personnel are

even rejecting promotions rather than face a financial loss as a result of the pension rules, said Tobias Ellwood, the former defence minister. In 2017-18, 3,840 members of the Armed Forces breached their annual tax-free pensions savings limit, exposing them to hefty tax bills. This was a near-quadrupling of the 1,010 breaches recorded in 2015-16. Earlier this month the Treasury said it would review the controversial rules introduced by George Osborne, the former chancellor, which restricts higher earners from putting more than

£10,000 annually into their pension pot without facing taxes. The standard allowance allows people to save £40,000 before the charges apply, but the threshold can fall to as low as £10,000 for those with incomes of more than £110,000. The figures come as the Government is trying to stem a staffing crisis in the NHS involving doctors reducing their hours to avoid tax bills for breaches of their annual pension allowance. Mr Ellwood said: "I know good people who have chosen to avoid getting their third star because they are lured

by jobs in Civvy Street but also put off by what their new pensions contribution will be. "Ultimately, the absence of real-terms increase in defence spending will mean that issues such as this will not be addressed. The reason why people leave the Armed Forces, why retention is difficult, is because of what they're doing off the battlefield – the welfare side and pay." Official Government figures showed that recruitment is increasing but the Army, with 74,400 regular fully-trained troops, is more than 7,000

short of the target figure of 82,000 – a deficit of almost 10 per cent. Mr Ellwood said if the issue was going to be sorted out it had to be "right across the board for police and for doctors as well as everybody who moves into a pay bracket, which means that they trip this pensions contribution". Matt Hancock, the Health Secretary, previously wrote in *The Daily Telegraph* that a "major overhaul" would allow senior doctors in England and Wales to "take on additional NHS work and be fairly rewarded for it without

the worry of an unexpected tax bill". Major General Neil Marshall, chief executive of the Forces Pension Society, told the *Financial Times*: "This is by no means restricted to the most senior officers or defence medical service personnel only. "Our research suggests that around 10 per cent of those affected are from the non-commissioned ranks." He added: "The potential impact of the pension tax is rapidly becoming a key factor many service personnel consider when deciding their future commitment to the Armed Forces."

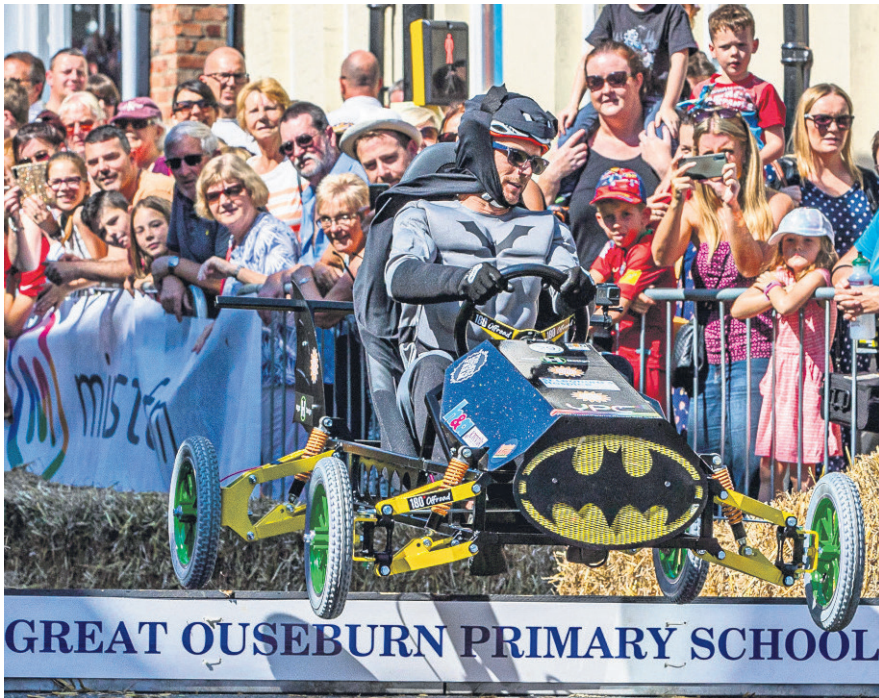
Shelters under strain as obese cats and dogs swell the ranks

◆ The number of "dangerously overweight" cats and dogs being admitted to animal shelters is on the rise, according to the RSPCA. With about half of dogs in the UK classified as obese, the problem is leaving staff under strain as they attempt to slim down the animals

before finding them new homes. Experts blamed some owners' sedentary lifestyles for causing their pet to pile on the pounds, while the portrayal of oversized pets as "cute" was described as equally unhelpful. The RSPCA said in one extreme case a Staffordshire

bull terrier, named Tara, was returned to a shelter after putting on 1st 5lb in the six months following her adoption, bringing her total weight to 4st 6lb. Dr Michael Lazaris, a vet at RSPCA Putney Animal Hospital in London, said: "It has probably got worse over the past few years because

perception of what a normal size pet looks like – it's kind of warped recently. "A lot of people think that it's cute to have a fat cat or dog, you laugh about how podgy they are, but it's quite painful for the pet, and it's also frustrating because it makes our job a lot more difficult."



Holy moly! Competitors take part in the annual Micklegate Run Soapbox Challenge in York, where around 40 teams hurtle down a 20ft (6m) ramp near Micklegate Bar towards the Ouse Bridge.

Reptile craze leads to global trade ban

◆ The international trade in many rare and colourful reptiles has been banned in a crackdown on social media-fuelled smuggling. Poaching for the illegal pet trade has reduced numbers of the Union Island gecko, a lizard with jewel-like markings from the small Caribbean island, to fewer than 10,000. Now, the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species has voted to ban commercial trade in the creature. Sales of the Tokay gecko, tiger gecko and hump-snout lizard will also be curbed. Geckos are popular on Instagram, where they are sold and posted for "likes" while the UK is one of the world's biggest reptile markets, with around eight million in British homes.

Nine out of 10 teenagers don't get enough sleep or exercise

◆ British teenagers spend too much time looking at screens and not enough exercising or sleeping – with less than 10 per cent meeting the recommended guidelines. Children aged between five and 17 should spend an hour a day doing moderate to vigorous exercise, no more than two hours a day in front of a screen and should sleep for eight hours a night, according to guidelines developed by Canadian researchers. But only 9.7 per cent of

14-year-olds in the UK manage all three recommendations, a study published in the journal *Jama Pediatrics* suggests. More than three quarters of teenagers spend more than two hours a day in front of a screen, it adds. The study used data collected from 4,000 British 14-year-olds between January 2015 and March 2016, *The Guardian* reports. Overweight teenagers and those with symptoms of depression were less likely to meet all three targets.

Always look on the bright side – and enjoy a longer life

◆ Looking on the bright side can boost the chances of having an "exceptionally" long life, say scientists. Researchers said people with greater optimism are more likely to live to 85 or older, suggesting a positive mindset has the potential to extend lifespans. The study by the Boston University School of Medicine was based on 69,744 women from the Nurses' Health Study and 1,429 men from the Veterans Affairs Normative Aging Study. The women were

aged between 58 and 86 when they completed an optimism assessment in 2004, and their mortality status was tracked through to 2014. The men's age range was 41 to 90 when they completed an assessment in 1986, and their mortality status was tracked through to 2016. When researchers compared the participants, based on their initial levels of optimism, they found that the most optimistic men and women had an 11 per cent to 15 per cent longer lifespan.

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