

The Anti-Smoking Device



BAXTER BLACK

ON THE EDGE OF COMMON SENSE

Dr. Erfan called to tell me his story. He's spent seventeen years inventing and testing a device to help people quit smoking. It involves a small battery operated unit that clips in your ear like a hearing aid. Whenever the smoker feels the urge to smoke, he pushes a button on the unit. It sends a micro-amp charge which stimulates a nerve in the ear. This nerve causes a release of natural body chemicals which reduce the need for a smoke.

Human trials have shown very positive results. Enough so that the device is already cleared for use in other countries. But not in the U.S. The F.D.A. is not satisfied. They are now demanding animal testing. Thus Dr. Erfan's call. His question, "Was I aware of any animals stupid enough to smoke."

Food for thought First we would have to find a species we could teach to smoke. Then once they were addicted we'd have to teach them to push a button the size of a match head whenever they felt the urge.

Certain species, regardless of their stupidity are eliminated because of life-style. Largemouth bass, for instance whales or sea anemone could never keep one lit.

Others lack suitable anatomical features necessary to smoking like prehensile lips, i.e. crocodiles, ducks or hippopotami.

Or ears in which to insert the unit. Penguins are out as are frogs, snakes, millipedes and woodpeckers.

Then the selected species would have to be physically capable of pressing the small button. As you could imagine even the most dexterous ungulate would have difficulty manipulating its cloven hoof. And I doubt the smartest rhinoceros in the world could reach his ear with his finger.

So, that narrows it down some: I came up with three suggestions for the good doctor. The anteater, the bird-dog and the cowboy.

Even granting the anteater a modicum of intelligence, none of the three species suggested have been known for their good judgement. In addition all are creatures of habit, work close to the ground and have a symbiotic relationship with another species which could be helpful in the collusion.

There are some who might question the anteater's ears but you gotta admit he has smoker's lips!

Dr. Erfan was kind but I could tell he thought my suggestions were ridiculous.

On a flyer I called up Dr. David Kessler, Czar and Mahatma of the F.D.A. to find out what animals he might suggest that would satisfy their criteria. I understood him to be a crusading anti-smoker and I thought this might be just what the doctor ordered.

But anyone who has dealt with the F.D.A. knows they move with

the speed of a glacier. Their motto "No decision is a good decision."

I'm still waiting for Dr. Kessler to return my call. I can only hope Phillip Morris is on hold, too.