

## US researchers create first mule through cloning

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WASHINGTON (AFP) - A team of US scientists has successfully created a male mule through cloning, making it the first equine species to be cloned, according to study results.



AFP/File Photo

The authors of the study, published in the journal Science, stressed that the cloning of this particular animal could aid in medical research for humans, particularly cancer research.

The mule, named Idaho Gem, was born May 4 and is the first hybrid animal to be created through cloning, because mules are created by breeding a mare with a donkey. Hybrid animals are generally sterile.

"The results were impressive and immediate," said Gordon Woods, a professor of animal and veterinary science at the University of Idaho.

An examination of the cloned foal and the mare that gave birth to it showed both to be in good health, Woods said.

The scientists were able to determine the influence of calcium levels on cellular growth, a discovery that could prove useful in human cancer research.

"The contrasts and similarities between humans and horses at the cellular level provide a number of insights about how the relationship of certain chemicals in the body affect both normal and abnormal cell activity," Woods said.

The mule is related genetically to a racing mule owned by an Idaho businessman who financed the university's research project, the scientists said.

The DNA of the cloned animal came from a fetal culture taken at the university in 1998.