

George Morales

Professor Killebrew

ENGL 21003 Spring 2021

February 18, 2021

NYT Science Section Summary and Response

In the New York Times article by Sabrina Imbler, “Meet Elizabeth Ann, the First Cloned Black-Footed Ferret”, which was published on Feb. 18, 2021, she talks about Elizabeth Ann, who is the first native endangered species to be cloned in North America, and how it came to happen and what meaning this brings for the future of this species and other species. As Sabrina Imbler said, “The black-footed ferret, the first species to be reintroduced to former habitats with the help of artificial insemination, has long been a model species for new conservation technologies. So it is fitting that the ferrets have become the second species to be cloned for this type of genetic rescue” (2021, Feb 18). To get to the point of cloning the black-footed ferret, it took many years, starting from the 1980s and onwards. It took finding a sample that was loaded with genetic diversity, a black-footed ferret named Willa, and a few more years to get the process moving and once the nonprofit, Revive and Restore, got the first-ever permit to research cloning endangered species in 2018, they went straight to work and partnered with the company ViaGen Pets & Equine to draw up the plans to make it happen. Around Halloween time in 2020, the first trial began with ViaGen creating embryos from Willa’s sample and implanting them into a ferret surrogate. By December 10, she was delivered and as the days passed progress was being made, and the future of the species looked to be promising with other clones already being planned to join Elizabeth. With the success of Elizabeth, the company, Revive and Restore will be working

on other projects to bring back extinct species. Mr. Novak, who is the lead scientist at Revive & Restore, said that if you can bring back extinct animals, with that same technology it could help with the recovery of species that are currently in danger, which is the reason why they keep the cells of extinct or at-risk animals. The reason this article was written was because the author wanted to inform the reader of the major technological advances that have been made and what is capable of being done in today's day in age. For example, the possibility of bringing back extinct animals in the not so far future with the achievement of Elizabeth Ann being born can now become a possibility. This topic is important because as Mr. Novak said, not only would you be able to bring back extinct animals, but you can also help at-risk animals as well with the same tech. I found this article and topic interesting because it amazes me how something older than me that has long been gone from this earth could be brought back for people to see, it's like seeing a piece of history but in the present.

The next New York Times article, "Potential for New Coronaviruses May Be Greater Than Known", by James Gorman, which was published Feb. 16, 2021, brings attention to the coronavirus and how the virus continues to evolve. The article speaks of the risks this could bring with the results of it possibly being more catastrophic than the current version of the virus. One of the worries about the virus changing is mutations, with the virus going around and people being infected with billions of virus particles, there's a possibility that in one of those cases you can have the potential for change in the genetic code of the virus. This in turn creates a new variant of the virus. Another worry about the virus changing is if the virus interchanges big pieces of genetic material with another virus. As stated by James Gorman, "If two different kinds of coronavirus inhabit the same cell, the result could be not a new variant, but a new species."

(2021, Feb 16). Either one of these changes can have a negative impact which now has researchers realizing that the possibility for these events to happen are at far greater rate than before and now an emphasis is being put on tracking these changes. It is believed that the current coronavirus going around is a result of a combination of two variants from the virus which came from an animal and was then passed on to humans. Researchers are now seeing which animals have a greater chance of being infected with more than one kind of coronavirus because they pose a great risk of changing the virus, which is being severely underestimated by many. The reason this article was written was because as more is being figured out about the virus, there are more things you have to worry about, and people need to start taking it more seriously because a lot of things aren't getting as much attention as they should be. This topic is important because currently most of the world is still going through a pandemic caused by a said virus and the last thing people want to do is go through another pandemic so it's good for people to stay informed and know what's going on in times like these. I found this article and topic interesting because it's the center of attention currently, everywhere you look you see something about this topic, and getting more information about it seems like the right thing to do right now.