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CANADA AND WORLD



MORE NEWS

Biological antifreeze keeps hearty beetle alive through -75C winters

Friday, December 18th, 2009 | 3:10 am

Canwest News Service

Canadians who have found themselves caught in a deep freeze by recent temperatures have a thing or two to learn from an Alaskan beetle, similar to the one pictured. According to a recent study from the University of Alaska Fairbanks Institute of Arctic Biology, the Alaska Upis beetle can survive temperatures as low as -75C. The beetle survives with a unique type of biological antifreeze that prevents ice crystals from forming and penetrating its cells. This research could eventually lead to the possibility of freezing tissues or organs for prolonged storage, according to Brian Barnes, director of the Institute of Arctic Biology. Unlike other biological antifreezes that have been discovered, the type found in the beetle has little or no protein. Instead, it comes from the same fatty acid that cell membranes do.

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