

China to send pork sperm on space flight

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The next manned space flight of China will carry capsules of pedigree pig sperm in a test that scientists hope will ultimately produce better quality pork.

The Shenzhou VI spacecraft will carry half an ounce of the sperm on its second mission, scheduled for October, to study whether exposure to outer space alters its genetic make-up, reported the Daily Telegraph Thursday.

"Exposed to micro-gravity, high levels of radiation and magnetic fields, the DNA of the sperm will genetically mutate," said Wang Jinyong, of the Chongqing Academy of Animal Husbandry. "There may be good and bad changes in the DNA -- our job is to keep the good changes and omit the bad so that we can improve the quality of the pig."

The sperm will be used to fertilize eggs and Wang will observe the extent of the mutation.

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