



Cast members of the Broadway shows *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel* lined up for smallpox vaccinations during the last U.S. outbreak, in 1947.

# Enemy Agent

Is smallpox a weapon of mass destruction? Should Americans be scared?

*The post-9/11 world raises no end of worries to keep us awake at night, and one of the most disquieting is: Could some enemy attack the United States with a massive dose of smallpox? This question took on new urgency Nov. 5, when government officials acknowledged that, along with the U.S., Iraq, North Korea, Russia and France have probably cultured the lethal virus. More disturbing, some of a stockpile amassed by the Soviets during the Cold War is missing, inciting fears that the potential biological weapon may have fallen into the hands of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda.*

*Long one of the world's most feared scourges, smallpox was declared eradicated in 1980 thanks to a global effort led by the World Health Organization. No country has immunized its children since 1986—the U.S. stopped in 1972—because the risk of a severe and even deadly reaction to the vaccine (which is derived from a live virus related to smallpox) now outweighs the chances of infection. This month, however, the Pentagon will begin vaccinating roughly 500,000 troops—first those responsible for assisting civilians in the*