

Scientists study mosquitoes, try to kill them before they make people sick

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This 2006 photo provided by U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows a female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito acquiring a blood meal from a human host. This type of mosquito is spreading the Zika virus and has made thousands of babies sick. James Gathany/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention via AP

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Mosquitoes buzzed about Maureen Coetzee's porch. She caught four of them in a jar.

Studying Mosquitoes To Kill Them

Coetzee is an expert on mosquitoes. She lives in the country of South Africa. Coetzee saw that they were the type of mosquitoes known as *aedes aegypti*. This type spreads the Zika disease. A disease makes a person sick. In the country of Brazil, thousands of babies have gotten sick. They were born with very small heads. Their brains and bodies may not work right. Scientists think the cause may be Zika.

Coetzee has spent her life studying mosquitoes. She wants to learn how to kill them.

Mosquitoes Can Make People Sick

Mosquitoes have done more harm to humans than other animals. Mosquitoes can carry deadly viruses. Germs that make people sick are called viruses. Each year, they bite millions of people and made them sick. They kill at least 600,000 people each year. Most of them are children in Africa.

Many people ask a good question. Why not try to kill all mosquitoes?

Coetzee says it is not a good idea. There are about 3,500 different kinds of mosquitoes. Only about 150 of them carry viruses. Experts could not kill them all.

Technology Helps Fight Mosquitoes

Technology, though, is helping in the fight against mosquitoes.

Coetzee studies mosquitoes that carry malaria. It is another disease. People sometimes die from malaria. Coetzee uses technology to change male mosquitoes. It stops new mosquitoes from being born.

The method is helpful in one big way. Scientists are able to change only the mosquitoes that carry viruses. Scientists can leave other kinds of mosquitoes alone. Therefore, not all mosquitoes are killed. This technology was made about 60 years ago.

Stop Them From Laying Eggs!

Now, there is a newer technology that changes mosquitoes. This method makes young mosquitoes die before they can lay eggs.

Some groups are against it. They say that another mosquito would just take over.

Coetzee has studied mosquitoes for more than 40 years. They are very interesting, she says.

Some Mosquitoes Don't Bite

She looked at a *Toxorhynchites brevivalpis* mosquito. It is also known as the elephant mosquito. Its wings spread almost an inch wide. It has fuzzy antennae. It is colored blue and gold. The mosquito does not bite humans.

They "are very beautiful," Coetzee said.

Quiz

- 1 What is a main reason why Maureen Coetzee studies mosquitoes?
- (A) to learn more about how mosquitoes fly
 - (B) to find mosquitoes that are beautiful
 - (C) to learn how to help mosquitoes lay more eggs
 - (D) to help prevent people from getting diseases from mosquitoes

- 2 What is one effect of the Zika disease?
- (A) Babies are born with very small heads.
 - (B) Babies get a disease called malaria.
 - (C) Mosquitoes are unable to lay eggs.
 - (D) Mosquitoes are unable to bite.

- 3 Read this sentence from the section "Mosquitoes Can Make People Sick."

Mosquitoes can carry deadly viruses.

What does "carry" mean in the sentence?

- (A) to have something inside of the body
 - (B) to move something while holding it
 - (C) to keep doing something
 - (D) to take control of something
- 4 Read the sentences from the section "Technology Helps Fight Mosquitoes."

Scientists can leave other kinds of mosquitoes alone. Therefore, not all mosquitoes are killed.

In the second sentence, which word could replace "Therefore" WITHOUT changing the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) But
- (B) So
- (C) Sure
- (D) While