

Survey: Public supports use of GMO mosquitoes to fight Zika virus

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The U.S. public overwhelmingly supports introducing genetically engineered mosquitoes to help control the spread of the Zika virus, two Purdue researchers found in a nationwide survey.

The preliminary findings in the Feb 10-12 online survey provide insight into [public sentiment](#) toward the use of [genetically modified organisms](#) in fighting the Zika virus.

The researchers said they were surprised by the findings because of the public debate over GMOs.

"Yet when it comes to fighting the Zika virus, public sentiment comes out pretty strong in favor of using these technologies to our advantage," said Nicole Widman, of Purdue University's Department of Agricultural Economics and lead researcher on the study.

Some public sentiment over GMOs has historically been negative. These preliminary findings demonstrate that opposition may not be the same across the board and that issue-specific cases and particularly health-related scenarios may soften the public's outlook.

In the survey of 964 US residents, 78 percent of the participants supported the introduction of [genetically modified mosquitoes](#) to fight the Zika virus.

"It's too soon to say what all the implications of our findings mean, but

we are already conducting further data analysis," said Wallace Tyner, co-researcher with Widmar in the Department of Agricultural Economics. "We can certainly say that what we've discovered is startling, and we're pleased that the U.S. public has demonstrated a willingness to be open to all the tools we've got in fighting this outbreak."

Eighty-four percent of the total survey participants were aware of the Zika virus outbreak, and 81 percent of them also were aware of the potential for microcephaly when pregnant women contract the virus.

The survey has a sampling error margin of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Provided by Purdue University

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