

Cyprus battles disease-carrying mosquitoes by breeding them with irradiated, sterilized ones

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Cyprus is battling an influx of disease-carrying mosquitoes by bringing in hundreds of thousands of the insects after being sterilized through

radiation.

The battle is primarily focused on eradicating the *Aedes aegypti* variety of mosquito that has been found in large numbers in the island nation's coastal town of Larnaca.

Cyprus' Environmental Health Services head Herodotos Herodotou told The Associated Press on Wednesday that the *Aedes aegypti* has been specifically targeted to prevent its potential migration to continental Europe.

The effort is also targeting the *Aedes albopictus* mosquito on the island, which is more common in Europe.

Both varieties can transmit to humans dangerous diseases such as dengue, Zika and [yellow fever](#), as well as West Nile virus.

Herodotou said that his service collects and dispatches both varieties of mosquitos—both eggs and grown insects—to laboratories in Italy and Austria where they're bred and separated into male and female.

The male mosquitos are then sterilized by being exposed to ionizing radiation at the International Atomic Energy Agency headquarters in Vienna.

About 100,000 mosquitoes are then brought back to the island every week so that they can be released at specific locations and times for breeding after they are fed. The mating won't produce any offspring and as a result, the mosquito population diminishes.

The program, which has also been tried in other European countries including Italy and Greece, will continue until the end of the year, according to Herodotou. The program's cost is primarily borne by the

International Atomic Energy Agency.

The benefits of the program is that authorities won't have to resort to potentially harmful insecticides to eradicate the pests.

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