

Self-destructing GE fly could be effective pest control method

A type of genetically engineered fly which eventually kills itself off could be an effective method of pest control, according to new research.

These male mutant flies have a lethal gene which interrupts female development. They were trialled in a greenhouse resulting in “population collapse.”

If released into the wild, they could prevent damage to crops in a way that is cheap, and environmentally friendly, according to the researchers.

The male GM flies produced by Oxfordshire-based biotechnology company Oxitec are only capable of producing male offspring. They have what Oxitec calls “pre-pupal female lethality.”

In other words, a female specific gene kills the females before they become adults. This means that after several generations, the flies die off as the males can no longer find mates.

Helen Wallace from Genewatch, an organisation that monitors the use of genetic technology, is critical of the work. She said that the long-term effects of releasing millions of GM flies would be impossible to predict. She was also concerned that dead fly larvae could be left inside crops. “Fruit grown using Oxitec’s GM flies will be contaminated with GM maggots which are genetically programmed to die inside the fruit they are supposed to be protecting.”

Read the full, original article: [Genetically modified flies ‘could save crops’](#)