

US syn bio corporation diving into GM mosquitoes, pest control research

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Oxitec, a University spin-out developing new ways of controlling disease-carrying insects and pests, is to be sold to a major U.S. corporation for U.S. \$160m.

Intrexon Corporation, a leader in synthetic biology, has agreed to acquire Oxitec, spun out from research in the Department of Zoology, in a deal worth £9 million to the University.

Oxitec was founded in 2002 by Zoology researchers, Luke Alphey and David Kelly. The company uses a genetic modification technique they invented, to design strains of insects which are incapable of reproducing effectively. These 'sterile' strains can be mass reared and then released into the wild, causing a population crash removing that particular insect species.

The technology has implications for the control of disease-carrying mosquitoes. The company has made significant progress in addressing dengue fever, which is carried by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito and infects up to 390 million people worldwide every year. Trials in Grand Cayman, Brazil and Panama have all shown *Aedes Aegypti* population reductions of more than 90 percent.

The modified *Aedes aegypti* mosquito is now the first GM insect approved as safe for use in Brazil. Oxitec has opened a factory in Brazil is waiting for commercial clearance to begin full scale production.

Read full, original post: [Biotech spin-out to be sold for \\$160 million](#)