

Can insects be genetically engineered as bioweapons?

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

“Gene drives” have enormous potential promise as well as risks. Because gene drives could rapidly propagate novel DNA through an entire population in the wild, they could be used, proponents say, to eradicate marauders such as the cane toads overrunning Australia. They might make mosquitoes resistant to the microbes that cause malaria or dengue fever, or even block the gene that makes locusts swarm, saving millions of tons of crops every year.

But gene drives might also doom important species to extinction, change the course of evolution, and perhaps be used to create bioweapons. That has caught the attention of the United Nations office that oversees the biological weapons treaty as well as of the FBI's Weapons of Mass Destruction directorate, as [STAT reported](#). And one science meeting includes an eye-catching agenda item: gene drive's potential for “entomological warfare.”

“Most gene drive research is being done in academic and government labs,” said Dr. Amesh Adalja, an infectious disease and biosecurity expert at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center who will be speaking at the National Academy of Sciences meeting. “But if a lone wolf or terrorist group is working on this, the regulation [of gene drives that government officials are contemplating] wouldn't make any difference.”

Read full, original post: [Gene drive gives scientists power to hijack evolution](#)