

Genetic engineering may drive Zika carrying mosquitos to extinction

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A controversial genetic technology able to wipe out the mosquito carrying the Zika virus will be available within months, scientists say.

The technology, called a “gene drive,” was demonstrated only last year in yeast cells, fruit flies, and a species of mosquito that transmits malaria. It uses the gene-snipping technology CRISPR to force a genetic change to spread through a population as it reproduces.

Three U.S. labs that handle mosquitoes, two in California and one in Virginia, say they are already working toward a gene drive for *Aedes aegypti*, the type of mosquito blamed for spreading Zika. If deployed, the technology could theoretically drive the species to extinction.

“We could have it easily within a year,” says Anthony James, a molecular biologist at the University of California, Irvine.

Any release of a gene drive in the wild would be hotly debated by ecologists. So far, [no public health agency has thrown its weight behind the idea](#). But with Zika sowing fear across Latin America and beyond, the technology is likely to get a closer look. “Four weeks ago we were trying to justify why we are doing this. Now they’re saying ‘Get the lead out,’” says James. “It’s absolutely going to change the conversation.”

Read full, original post: [We Have the Technology to Destroy All Zika Mosquitoes](#)