

GMO mosquitoes set for Florida release during first Dengue fever outbreak in 10 years

The Florida Keys is experiencing its first outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease Dengue fever in 10 years. The Florida Department of Health [July 17] confirmed two more cases of the illness in the island chain, bringing the total number of cases to 16.

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No one in the Keys has died from Dengue this year, and all who have gotten it so far are expected to make a full recovery, according to a health department press release.

But, the illness is potentially deadly and causes severe flu-like symptoms, including aches and pains, fever and sometimes a rash.

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The outbreak coincides with renewed efforts from an international biotech company that wants to release millions of genetically engineered male *Aedes aegypti* bugs in the Keys as a way to eliminate the natural population.

The controversial plan already passed state and federal regulatory hurdles, and the company, Oxitec, is waiting for approval from the Mosquito Control District's five elected commissioners.

There is vocal organized opposition to the experiment from both international and local environmental groups.

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The way the experiment is supposed to work is Oxitec will release boxes of male *Aedes aegypti* eggs into an as-of-now undetermined area of the Keys. Water will be added and adult mosquitoes will emerge and fly out amongst the existing population to breed.

However, the released mosquitoes are bred with a "killing mechanism" that does not allow their offspring to survive

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