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750 million genetically modified mosquitoes to be released – 25th August, 2020

Level 0

Scientists will set free 750 million genetically modified mosquitoes. This is to cut the number of insects with diseases. It will start next year in Florida. The modified mosquitoes are male. They carry something that will kill young females before they get to biting age. Only female mosquitoes bite us.

Environmental groups are not happy. One group called the plan a "Jurassic Park experiment". It called Florida "a testing ground for mutant bugs". It could damage ecosystems and create a new super-species of mosquito. It said the plan would put people and the environment at risk. The scientists said there was no risk.

Level 1

Scientists will put 750 million genetically modified mosquitoes into the wild. This is to reduce the number of insects that have diseases like yellow fever. It will start next year in a chain of tropical islands south of Florida. The modified mosquitoes are all male. They carry a protein that will kill young females before they reach biting age. Only female mosquitoes feed on our blood and bite us. Scientists hope to cut the number of disease-carrying mosquitoes.

Environmental groups are not happy. One group called it a "Jurassic Park experiment". It called Florida "a testing ground for mutant bugs". It warned the project could damage ecosystems. The experiment could create a new super-species of mosquito. One environmental group said the mosquitoes would put people, the environment and endangered species at risk. The company releasing the mosquitoes said there was no risk.

Level 2

Scientists will release 750 million genetically modified mosquitoes into the wild. This is to reduce the number of insects that have diseases like Zika virus and yellow fever. It will start next year in the Florida Keys - a long chain of tropical islands stretching south of Florida. The modified mosquitoes are all male. They carry a protein that will kill young females before they reach biting age. Only female mosquitoes feed on our blood and bite us. Males only feed on nectar from flowers. Scientists hope the number of disease-carrying mosquitoes in the area will fall.

Environmental groups are not happy with the plan. One group called it a "Jurassic Park experiment". It called Florida "a testing ground for mutant bugs". It warned the project could damage local ecosystems and this could never be reversed. The experiment could create a new super-species of mosquito that is resistant to insect spray. One environmental group said: "The release of genetically engineered mosquitoes will needlessly put Floridians, the environment and endangered species at risk." The company releasing the mosquitoes said there was no risk.

Level 3

Scientists in Florida will release 750 million genetically modified mosquitoes into the wild. The aim is to reduce the number of existing mosquitoes that have diseases like Zika virus, yellow fever and dengue fever. The plan is to release the mosquitoes next year in the Florida Keys. This is a long chain of tropical islands stretching 170km south of the southern tip of Florida. The modified mosquitoes are all male. They carry a protein that will kill off any female offspring before they reach biting age. It is only female mosquitoes that feed on blood and bite humans. Males only feed on nectar from flowers. Over time, scientists hope the disease-carrying population of mosquitoes in the area will fall.

Environmental groups are not happy with the plan to release the genetically modified mosquitoes. One group called it a "Jurassic Park experiment". It said Florida was "a testing ground for mutant bugs". Many environmentalists warn that the project could cause damage to local ecosystems that could never be reversed. They say the experiment could even create a new super-species of mosquito that is resistant to insecticides. The environmental group Friends of the Earth said: "The release of genetically engineered mosquitoes will needlessly put Floridians, the environment and endangered species at risk in the midst of a pandemic." The company releasing the mosquitoes said there was no risk.