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THE BEST WAY TO GET RID OF MOSQUITOES? TURN THEM ALL INTO MALES

By **Lulu Chang** — September 5, 2016 11:16 AM



If there's one creature that has attracted the collective wrath of seemingly everyone on the planet, it's the pesky mosquito. From West Nile to Zika, these insects have long served as vectors of disease, and now, there's new talk of eradicating them altogether. And the way

to go about doing it? By turning them all into males. Because the females are the ones who do all the bloodsucking — and of course egg-laying.

Mosquitoes are the deadliest insect (or animal, for that matter) in the world, claiming around 500,000 lives in 2015 alone. As such, says entomologist Zach Adelman of Texas A&M University, “I think it is our moral duty to eliminate this mosquito,” speaking specifically about *Aedes aegypti*, a species of mosquito responsible for carrying and spreading at least four deadly viruses. And the way to eliminate the mosquito may be through a new gene-editing technology — one that programs the insects to develop as males.

Over time, the predominantly male population would run out of females with whom to mate, thereby causing the whole species to go extinct.

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Of course, while there's always an ethical dilemma associated with killing off a species altogether, the disappearance of *Aedes aegypti* may not be the worst thing in the world, scientists say. As the Wall Street Journal reports, “Many entomologists say eradicating *Aedes aegypti* would have a minimal impact on the environment,” given that humans are the mosquitoes' exclusive food source. And *as* their only food source, we've been infected with the dengue virus, chikungunya, and yellow fever, just to name a few.

“Aedes aegypti is literally probably the most dangerous animal in the world,” Omar Akbari, a molecular biologist and assistant professor of entomology at the University of California, Riverside told the Journal.

So if turning a bunch of them male and ultimately eradicating them altogether is a possibility, it may just be one to check out.



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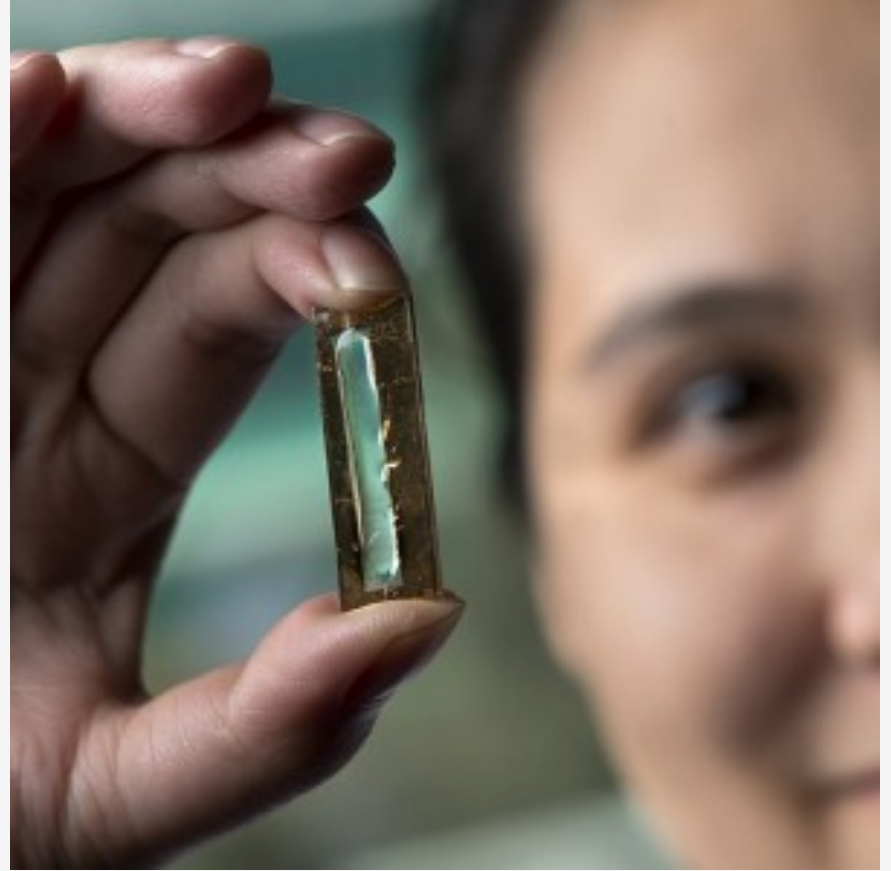
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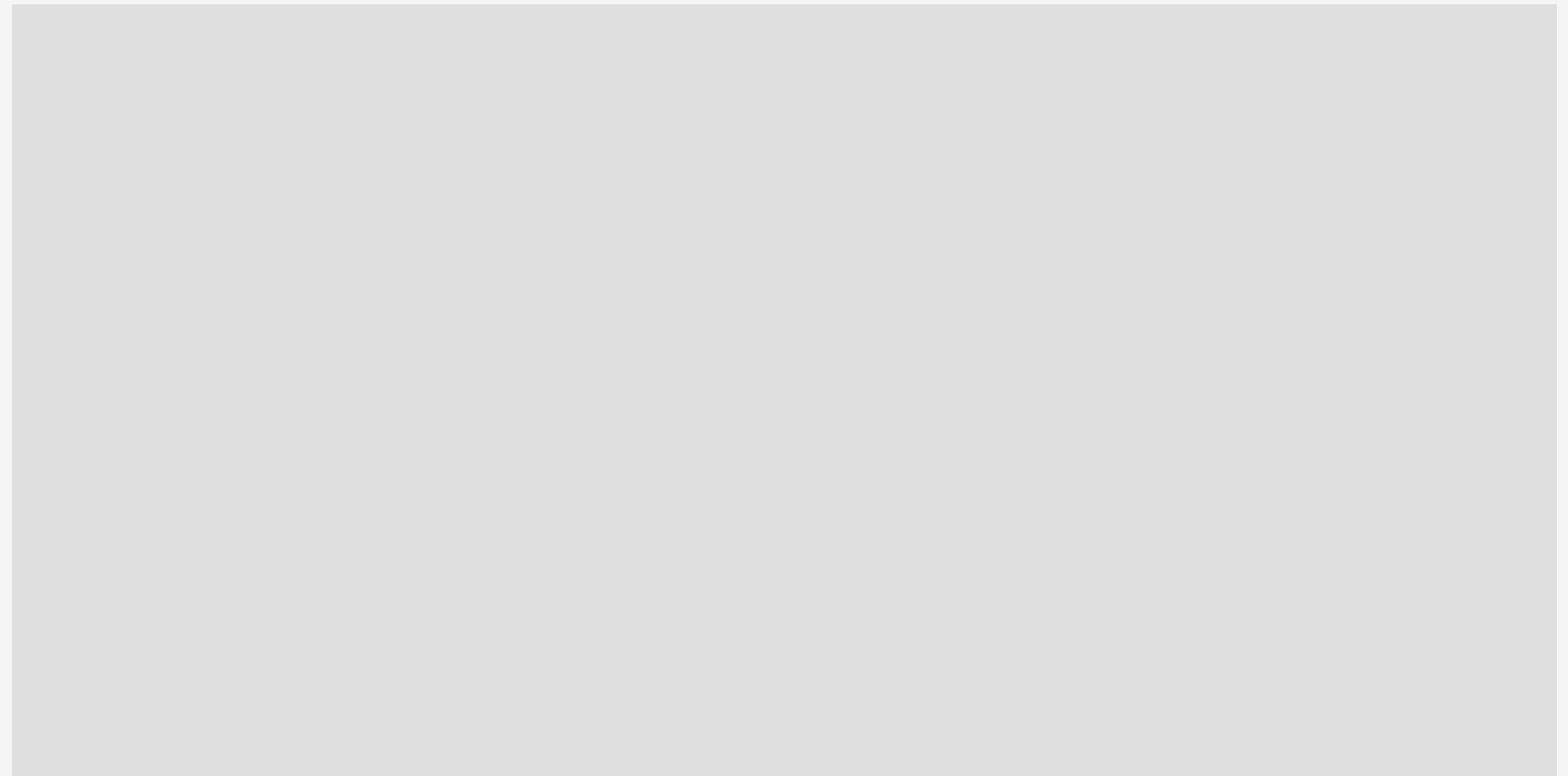


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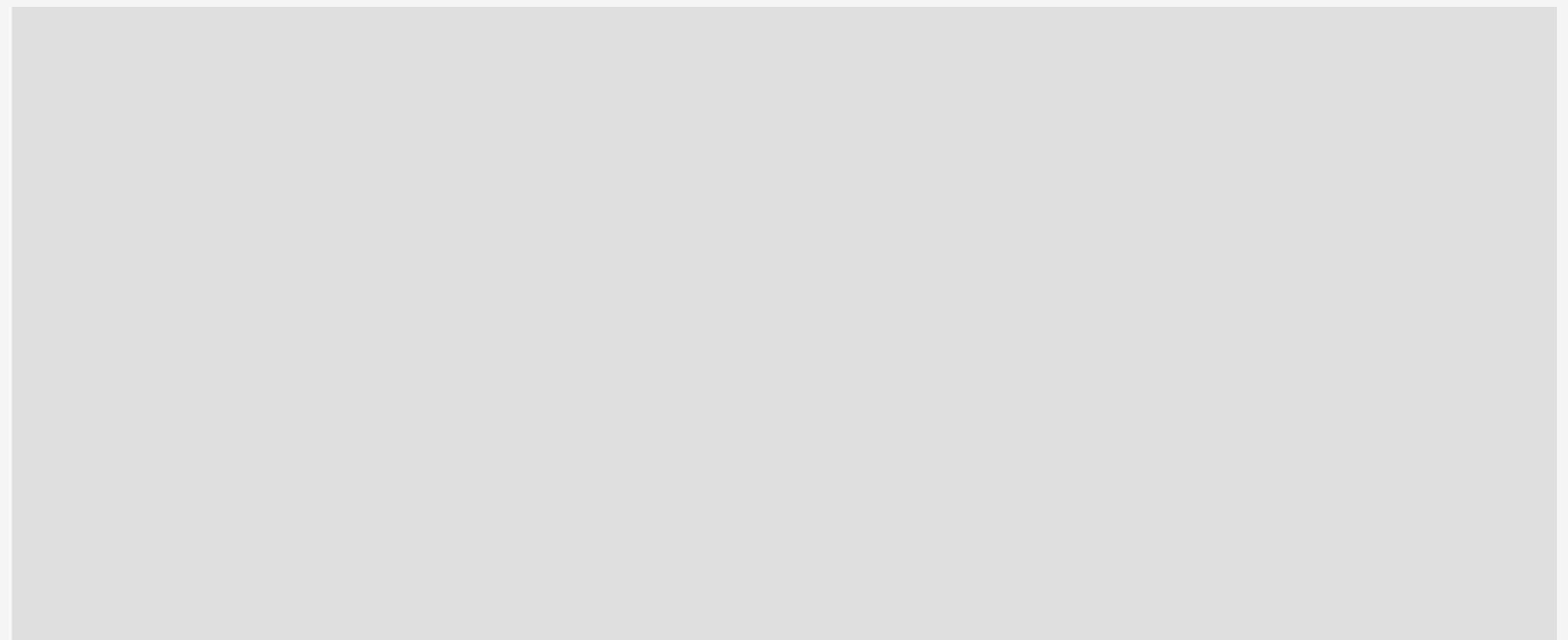
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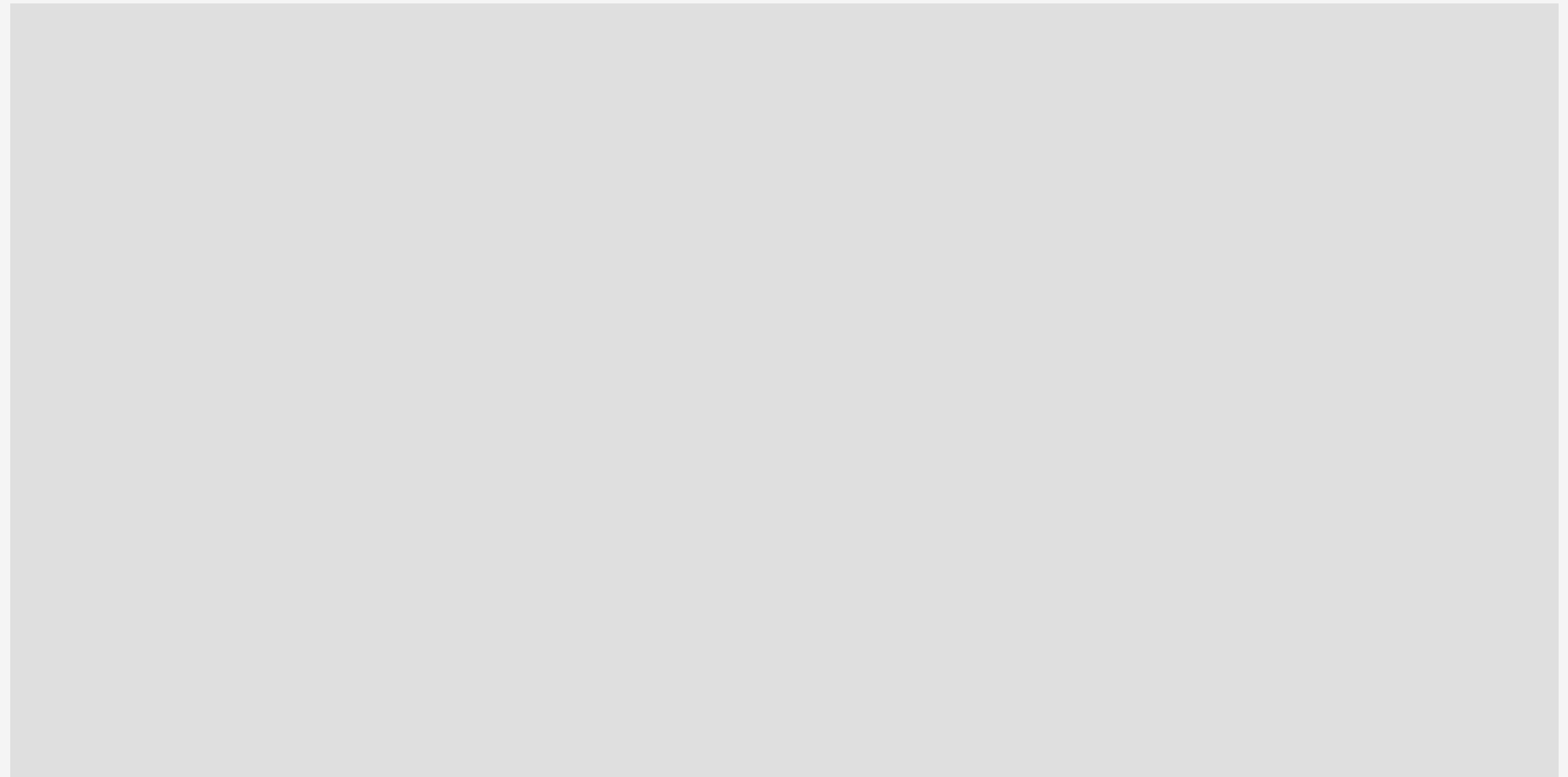
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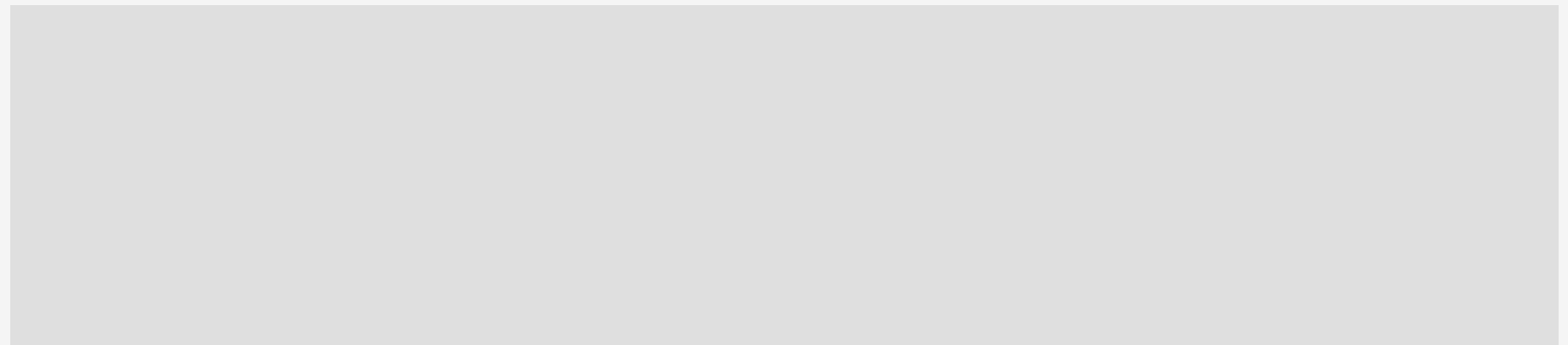
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