

Slap-Splat! What a Relief It Is!

Written by Alex Baer
Monday, 08 August 2016 15:07

Relief comes in many forms. In one song, it was splish-splash, and taking a bath. In one heartburn-aid classic commercial, the relief came right after the plop-plop, fizz-fizz.

When it comes to mosquitoes, we mostly still rely on swatting ourselves silly, and then checking around for any lucky-hit carcasses. Those middle-of-the night, self-pummeling, slap-and-swat fests may be drawing to a merciful close.

This prospect comes as wonderful news to great numbers of people, especially those who live around thick mosquito populations, and to those who are tired of beating themselves up in the dark trying to make the *Eeeeeeee-yeeee-eeeeee* stop, and to those who now scare each other by suddenly jumping out from behind doors and shouting *Zika!* unexpectedly.

That swatting-and-swelling-and itchy-all-over relief, you may be interested to know, is en route by way of [trumpet-and-brass sting!] *genetically modified organisms*, or GMOs.

This is stunning scientific news, for a country whose House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology is chaired and filled by GOP members who are still unsure if gravity is a valid concept, let alone climate change.

Heck, we still have no national laws and programs in place to help us grasp current science, such as the basic concepts and benefits of slowing down fossil fuel addiction with solar polar, wind and wave energy, and other alternative sources. This use of GMOs is even more stunning news, when Americans can't even agree if GMOs are good or bad in our *foods* -- or if consumers should dare be given the correct information by doing something radical like, oh, *putting that information on a food label*.

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Sidebar: Science doesn't come easy to many in this nation anymore. Many people are spooked disbelievers of the superstitious, basically untrustworthy nature of Science. They believe their smartphones work, but not climate change: ala carte, pick-and-choose science believers.

Heck, we're hard-pressed to recycle *all* rigid food and beverage containers. Perhaps if these containers threatened to warp our offspring -- I mean, in even *more* noticeable ways than they *already* do, via groundwater and other contamination sources -- we'd get after it like there's no tomorrow. But, with no clear and apparent threat, we have nothing but an endless supply of tomorrows -- so, *no hurry there...*

You know, if that unrecycled-container threat had a more marketable, catchy name -- something like *Meltface!* or *Bonesplit!* or *Crotchrot!* we'd see landfills ease way back on the stick, re: exploding growth rates.

How exploding? The U.S. makes up 5% of the world's population, we account for more than 30% of the world's garbage. (I imagine all those "We're Number One" shouters underfoot never imagined this Olympian category of competition which we so handily win, without trying.)

* * *

OK, back to skeeters: How does this GMO approach work? Well, first, you catch a Zika-laden mosquito, then, you scold it *very sternly* for carrying Zika, and get the mosquito to regret doing so, by encouraging it to change its ways. Then, you provide it a brochure, in Mosquitese, and 17 other languages, describing a number of program options, including counseling and abstinence.

If that doesn't work, you waterboard the bejeezuz out of it, until it promises you anything at all, just to get you to stop, then you declare victory!

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[No, sorry -- that was from another piece I was working on...]

Skeeters, Take 2: The mosquitoes are male, and have on board genes fatal to any offspring produced with females met in the wild -- like at Spring Break bars, or, in rare cases, after a period of coffee, movie, and dinner dates.

Truly: The whole process has been given a go-ahead by the FDA for field-test trials in Florida. (Mosquitoes will still need to pick up the date checks themselves.)

Oxitec, the company pioneering the task, ran a test in Brazil and saw a 90% reduction in the local mosquito population. In Florida, meanwhile, just one mosquito control district spends a million dollars a year to control skeeters with insecticide, and comes away with a variable 30% to 60% control rate.

Scientists in the private and public sectors have studied the issue and say the process is safe, and holds no dangerous environmental impacts.

(Three... Two... One... Let the speculations from the House Committee on Unscientific Hoodoo and Voodoo begin!)

Whatever you might think of this trial run, and whatever trust issues and/or conspiracy theories and/or alternative reality and/or scientific.pseudo-scientific narratives you may be packing, one thing is pretty clear: Current efforts won't keep Zika off our shores -- and getting Mosquito World to build us a "Zika Wall" won't be suggested anytime soon.

(OK, don't quote me on that last part. With Trump, you just never know.)

Of course, we could do *nothing* new, and just plan to have the Zika-based Olympics right here,

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in time for next year, with all-age amateur events like:

- The Overhand Smash
- The Two-Handed Face Fan
- The Arm Chop
- The Leg Clip
- The Chest Swat
- The Buttocks Slap
- The Cautionary, Personal-Area Wave
- The Butterfly Smush
- The Spin-and-Whirl
- The Windmill Defense
- The Turbine Offense
- The 100-Yard Run for Your Life....

You know: Like on TV sports now, but with home-turf, killer-mutant Zika bugs big enough to lug off school busses and skewer semis.

Now, that would *really* give all those giant-radiation-bugs from those 50s flicks a second thought about strolling past us, giving us "ain't we somethin'" eye, strutting their stuff.

Today's Bonus:

London's underground mosquito labs (with two mild expletives at the end) and a good-natured victim/reporter:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjpukE1iCYs>

Queens of the Stone Age, with The Mosquito Song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85aFFQZ9To>

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