NEWS LESSON

The Factory That Makes Mosquitoes on Purpose



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What would you think if someone said they were releasing more mosquitoes near your home?
2. What makes you trust a surprising scientific idea?
3. Who would you want to explain a new local health project?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**dengue**	☐	A	a very small living thing that you cannot see
2	**bacterium**	☐	B	people who live in a particular place
3	**chemicals**	☐	C	have babies, or make young animals
4	**residents**	☐	D	the size of something
5	**breed**	☐	E	a plan of work with a clear aim
6	**standing water**	☐	F	substances made in a factory or laboratory, such as poison
7	**scale**	☐	G	water that stays in one place and does not move
8	**programme**	☐	H	a disease from mosquito bites that gives people a high fever

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A new factory in Curitiba breeds mosquitoes carrying a bacterium called Wolbachia. The insects can still bite, but they pass on dengue far less easily.

1 Imagine hearing that your city plans to release thousands of mosquitoes into the streets. Most people would probably be worried. Mosquitoes can spread dengue fever, a disease that can make people very ill. Yet in Brazil, releasing certain mosquitoes is part of an unusual plan to protect the public.

2 Scientists have found that a bacterium called Wolbachia, found naturally in many insects, makes it much harder for a mosquito to pass some viruses on to humans. In July 2025, a large mosquito factory opened in Curitiba, in southern Brazil, to produce mosquitoes that carry it. Its purpose is not to create more dangerous insects.

3 Scientists raise the insects in carefully controlled conditions. When mosquitoes carrying Wolbachia are released, they breed with the local mosquitoes. Over time, more and more of the mosquitoes in the area carry the bacterium. The aim is to bring down the number of people who catch dengue, Zika and chikungunya.

4 This idea sounds surprising because people usually fight mosquitoes by killing them. Spraying chemicals and removing standing water can help, but the insects keep coming back. The Wolbachia method tries to change the mosquitoes themselves rather than simply reduce their numbers for a few weeks. It works more slowly, but the effect is designed to last.

5 There is an important detail: these mosquitoes can still bite. They are not harmless, and no single method can stop every case of dengue. People still need to get rid of standing water around their homes and protect themselves from bites. The new programme works together with those older methods, not instead of them.

6 Public health workers also have to explain the plan to local residents. It is natural to feel nervous when a government sets up a factory for insects and then releases them near your house. Clear information matters here as much as good science does.

7 Brazil has already used the method in other cities, and the new factory is designed to produce mosquitoes on a much larger scale. Sometimes the best answer to a problem is not to fight nature harder. In the long run, it may be to understand nature well enough to work with it.

Sources: Paraná State Health Department. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The factory in Curitiba opened in July 2025. T F NG
2. The programme works alongside older methods such as removing water. T F NG
3. Mosquitoes carrying Wolbachia cannot bite. T F NG
4. The factory produces a million mosquitoes a week. T F NG
5. The Wolbachia method works faster than spraying. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

avoid	explain	ignore	nervous	protect	spread	unusual

1. Mosquito bites can _____ serious diseases from person to person.
2. Some residents feel _____ about living near a mosquito factory.
3. Long sleeves and nets help to _____ you from bites.
4. The mayor must _____ the plan clearly so that people understand it.
5. Most cities do not breed insects, so this is a very _____ plan.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. In July 2025, a large mosquito factory _____ in Curitiba. (OPEN)
2. The bacterium _____ naturally in many insects. (FIND)
3. In the past, many cities _____ chemicals to kill mosquitoes. (SPRAY)
4. When the mosquitoes _____ , they breed with the local ones. (RELEASE)
5. Brazil _____ this method in other cities, so it is not completely new. (USE)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A collocation is a pair of words that naturally go together. Learn the pair as one piece, for example catch a disease.

catch	heavy	make	pay	public	standing	take

1. People usually _____ dengue after being bitten by an infected mosquito.
2. Empty any _____ water around your home, because mosquitoes breed there.
3. _____ health workers visit homes to answer questions.
4. Mosquitoes multiply quickly after _____ rain.
5. Residents can _____ part in meetings about the plan.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would residents need to know before welcoming these mosquitoes?
2. Would a successful trial elsewhere persuade you to support a local project?
3. How could scientists earn trust before asking people to accept a change?

9 Role-play: a meeting about the mosquito release

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the health officer

Mosquitoes carrying Wolbachia will soon be released in a neighbourhood. Explain the plan to a resident. Answer at least two questions honestly, including the fact that the mosquitoes can still bite.

Student B · the resident

You live in the neighbourhood and you're worried about more mosquitoes near your home. Ask questions and say what would make you feel safer. Decide at the end if you support the plan.

Useful phrases

I'm worried about the mosquitoes near my house.

I'd like to understand how it works.

Let me explain what we're doing.

They can still bite, but they don't pass on dengue as easily.

What if the plan doesn't work?

I'm still not convinced, but I'll come to the meeting.

Afterwards, tell the class: did the resident support the plan, and what changed their mind?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 H · 2 A · 3 F · 4 B · 5 C · 6 G · 7 D · 8 E

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 T · 3 F · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 spread · 2 nervous · 3 protect · 4 explain · 5 unusual

6 Verb forms

1 opened · 2 is found · 3 sprayed · 4 are released · 5 has used

7 Language focus

1 catch · 2 standing · 3 Public · 4 heavy · 5 take

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