

Rodent plagues, immunocontraception and the mousepox virus

Hannu Ylönen

Dept of Biological and Environmental Science, University of Jyväskylä, PO Box 35, 40351 Jyväskylä, Finland

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Abstract

Rodent plagues cause a major problem for agriculture in many temperate regions, and immunocontraception offers a new method to control fertility in these and other pest vertebrates. However, it is difficult to find an effective carrier for contraceptives for large numbers of pest animals in the field. In a new study, Jackson *et al.* manipulated the mousepox virus to boost the immune response in infected mice *Mus musculus* when testing the basis for controlling their fecundity rates. However, all infected mice (and half of recently immunized mice) died. Despite these unexpected and dramatic results of the engineering of mousepox virus, immunocontraception remains the most promising method for fertility control and management of pest vertebrates.

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