

Mould may help to beat malaria

A COMMON type of fungus could be the key to fighting deadly malaria, according to a team of Scottish researchers.

They say infecting the mosquitoes with a simple fungus, similar to the furry mould which grows on old cheese, could help wipe out the disease.

Scientists at Edinburgh University are hopeful that it will be an organic, environmentally friendly and cheap way to stop mosquitoes from passing on malaria.

They teamed up with experts from Imperial College, London, to study the disease, which claims at least 1 million lives each year.

Their research found that when the blood-eating insects come into contact with fungal spores, the fungus grows in-

side the mosquito, eventually killing it.

In a study published in Science journal, they said that spraying the spores on to netting, walls or ceilings would ensure that mosquitoes are too weak to pass on the disease.

Professor Andrew Read, of Edinburgh University, said: "When mosquitoes have taken a big amount of blood they rest up on house walls and ceilings to digest it. They are so big and fat that they cannot fly off for about six hours.

"We have shown that if they are sitting among spores, the fungus penetrates the mosquito and kills it.

"It takes two weeks for malaria to develop in a mosquito before it can pass it on to another human. But this way, we can kill the insect

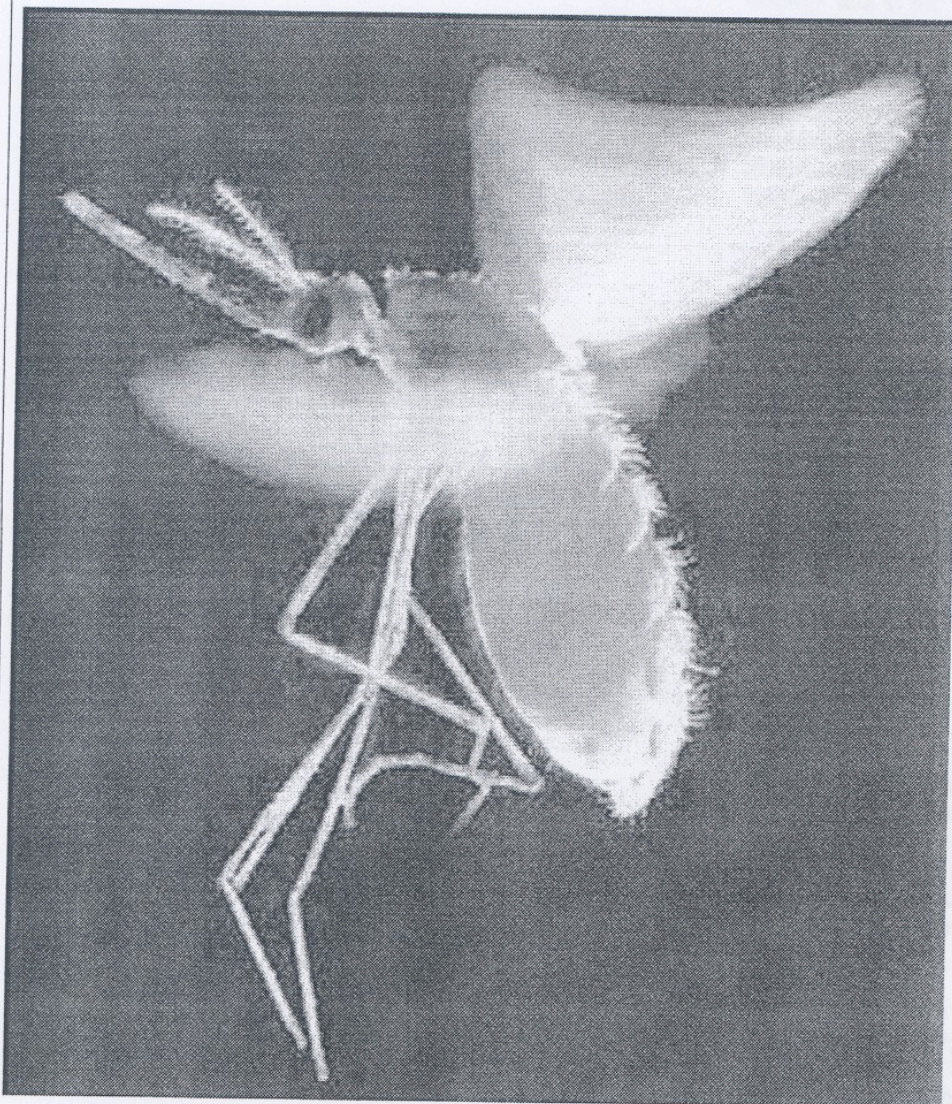
before that. As they get sicker, they are less likely to blood feed or fly well so they run out of steam and grind to a halt."

He added many mosquitoes were becoming resistant to chemical pesticides.

Research carried out in Tanzania, for a companion study, also backed up claims that the "biological pesticide" could help control the disease.

Experts hung sheets with fungal spores inside houses where people are bitten nearly once a night by a malaria-carrying mosquito.

They discovered that the method could reduce the number of times a person is attacked by the insects to once every three weeks.



Fungal spores may be the key to neutralising the malaria-carrying mosquito