



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oxitec Opinion Survey Results Released

A large majority of Grand Cayman residents support the public health programme known as the *Friendly Aedes aegypti Project* under way in West Bay. A recent opinion poll has revealed that 69 per cent of residents support this initiative, while only 13 per cent oppose the programme.

The Mosquito Research Control Unit (MRCU), in collaboration with biotechnology company Oxitec, began its release programme of genetically engineered (GE) adult male mosquitoes in late July to combat the non-native mosquito that is known to spread viral diseases such as Zika, dengue and chikungunya.

The survey to gauge public opinion on the releases was conducted over a two week period, from 10 – 24 July, 2016. Survey takers went door to door to more than 800 houses and questioned a representative sample of around 700 community members throughout Grand Cayman.

“The objective of this research was to increase understanding of community knowledge, attitudes, and opinions regarding mosquito control and GE mosquitoes,” said Oxitec Project Manager Dr. Renaud Lacroix.

“The polling was contracted to independent qualified professionals who arranged for face to face interviews throughout the island,” added Dr. Lacroix.

“The survey has revealed overwhelming support for the programme, and the communication campaign will be continued during the project to keep residents informed,” he said.

Poll results also show 74 per cent of residents are worried or very worried about Zika, dengue and chikungunya. Related to this, 89 per cent think it is important or very important to test new tools against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.

“The MRCU uses the best tools available in the fight against *Aedes aegypti*. The deployment of the most advanced techniques available, including Oxitec’s *Friendly Aedes aegypti*, is firmly in the public health interest, as the traditionally used tools have proven to have limitations in effectiveness,” said MRCU Director Dr. William Petrie.

On Monday, 8 August, 2016, Acting Medical Officer of Health Dr Samuel Williams-Rodriguez reported the islands’ first locally transmitted Zika Virus, and the next day confirmed another resident tested positive.

“The subsequent wider expansion of this project throughout Grand Cayman is expected to benefit all residents and visitors. The appearance of Zika virus in Grand Cayman adds to the need to implement this programme without delay,” explained Dr. Petrie.

The Cayman Islands now has eight confirmed Zika cases, six of which were acquired while traveling abroad.

For advice on mosquito control measures contact the MRCU on 949-2557 or DEH on 949-6696 in Grand Cayman, or 948-2321 in Cayman Brac.

(GIS)

For the official Cayman Islands Government web portal, www.gov.ky:

Web title: Oxitec Survey Results

Web blurb: A recent study conducted by Oxitec showed high support for the Friendly *Aedes aegypti* GE mosquito project in the Cayman Islands.