

Tiger mosquito travels down the motorway

This year no tiger mosquitoes have been spotted in Belgium, but ITM researchers warn that the insects are finding new ways to get into the country.

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Dit is de omschrijving

Scientists from the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp have not detected any tiger mosquitoes in Belgium in 2019 yet. Last summer, the species was found in five different locations. However, the fact that no exotic mosquitoes were spotted this year does not mean that this summer will be tiger mosquito-free. Research has shown that these insects like to “hitch a ride” from places where they have settled such as Germany and France. Belgian tourists who drive through these countries may not be aware that they have a few unwanted passengers on board. Consequently, the tiger mosquito may still show up in Belgium later this year.

The ITM team responsible for monitoring exotic mosquitoes in our country is currently very busy. “After the discovery of tiger mosquitoes in five places, we are on the alert and wonder whether they will show up again this year. We have not yet spotted any in the places where we found them last summer. It seems like the control measures were effective or that the mosquitoes did not manage to survive our winter,” says Isra Deblauwe who is responsible for the daily follow-up of the [mosquito monitoring project \(MEMO\)](#).

Last year, ITM scientists discovered eggs in motorway car parks in the provinces of Luxembourg and Namur which proved that tiger mosquitoes now come into Belgium from our neighbouring countries, France and Germany via new routes. It was the first time that they reached Belgium in this way. With the holidays around the corner, there is a real chance that the tiger mosquito will once again be brought to our country by ‘passing’ traffic.

“Our findings show that monitoring exotic mosquitoes in Belgium continues to gain social relevance,” says Dr Wim Van Bortel, general coordinator of the MEMO project. “This year we once again conduct extensive surveillance for tiger mosquitoes and other exotic species in 20 risk locations in Belgium. If we can timely map the areas where the mosquitoes are spotted, we will be able to better control them and delay their propagation here for as long as possible. Even if the mosquitoes settle in our country, it is important to closely monitor the populations to estimate the possible disease transmission risk.”

In 2019, researchers of the MEMO project for the first time found some specimens of the Asiatic mosquito (*Aedes japonicus*) near Maasmechelen where there is an established population of *Aedes koreicus*. *Aedes japonicus* and *Aedes koreicus* are less aggressive species and not major disease vectors. *Aedes japonicus* has previously been confirmed in the provinces of Liège and Namur.