

Bomber bees eradicate mould in strawberries

by Chantal Foulds

Research into biocontrol of gray mould (*Botrytis*) in strawberries has come up with an interesting way of delivering the agent to the site of infection. At the University of Guelph, bees are being used to carry a fungi, *Geocladium*, to the plant. Test results have shown that the fungi is as effective as chemicals in controlling the disease. The fungi is prepared with talc and placed in a dispenser in a bee hive. The talc permits better adherence of the spores to the bees. As the bees travel the field and visit the flower, *Geocladium* spores are deposited right where the infection occurs.

The fungus occurs naturally in strawberry fields but, evidently, not to the extent that it completely controls gray mould. By using bees, densities of 50,000 spores/ flower are maintained, resulting in effective control. In the tests, the fungi/talc formulations were refilled in the dispensers every second or third night.

Alas, *Geocladium* will not be available all that soon on the market. Although commercial production of the fungi appears to be simple, tests will have to be conducted.

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