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## Pine beetle expert here Wednesday

By Advocate staff  
 Published: August 16, 2008 4:00 AM

Researchers are developing ways to battle mountain pine beetles with their own genes.

Janice Cooke, co-leader of the Tria Project, is part of a team of researchers looking at relationships between the mountain pine beetle, the fungus it carries with it and the trees they jointly invade.

It appears that the fungus may play a role in helping make the tree more comfortable for the beetle and could also be playing a role in killing it, Cooke said from her office at the University of Alberta.

Integral to its investigation of the three species, the project is tagging and mapping beetle genes, said Cooke. Genomics research will help researchers answer two sets of questions.

First of all, by keeping track of different families of beetles through their genetic tags, the project can determine where they've been and perhaps figure out where they're going.



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by Contributor

Secondly, genetic tagging can help determine if beetles that survive winter cold snaps are adapting to new environments, such as Northern Alberta.

Large numbers of beetles die off during the winter, said Cooke. The question is whether those that survive are producing new generations of beetles that are better adapted to cold winters.

Altogether, the Tria Project is using genomics to help sharpen the tools already available to forest managers in their efforts to fight off the tiny tree killers.

Cooke is bringing results of their work so far to the Red Deer and District Museum on Wednesday as part of its MAG Café series and in conjunction with the Gee! in Genome exhibit. She will present the project on Wednesday at the museum from 6:30 to 9 p.m.

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