

Cicadas Are Being Infected With Fungus That Makes Them Zombies

These cicadas spend up to 17 years of their life underground.

Cicadas are succumbing to a parasitic infection that basically turns them into zombies.

You read that right. The fungus scientifically known as *Massospora* has been infecting male cicadas for years, according to a journal from [PLOS Pathogens](#) as reported by [LiveScience](#). It doesn't end there though. Much like a zombie army, the male cicada zombies begin to work toward growing their numbers by luring in other male cicadas using a flickering wing movement traditionally used by female cicadas to lure in male mates.

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When the non-infected male cicadas attempt to mate with the infected cicada after being lured in, the *Massospora* is transferred and it begins to infect the new cicada by eating away at its abdomen. It replaces the abdomen with itself, which looks like a grouping of yellow spores.

It's apparently not easy to spot this zombie-like transformation occur as the cicadas usually infected are of the *Magicicada* genus, which spend up to 17 years of their life underground at a time. Fortunately for the scientists behind the *PLOS Pathogens* report, they're able to track different populations of cicada emerging at different times through a cycle of years.

Once the abdomen is transformed into a mass of spores, the now-zombified cicada will fly around and drop spores to infect even more cicada. As to how the *Massospora* controls this spore-dropping flight and the mating call that occurs after infection, scientists aren't yet sure which chemicals within the fungus are making that happen. A non-infected cicada's life after emerging from the ground years and years after it is born would generally only last a few weeks. They mate, lay eggs, then die. When infected by the *Massospora*, their life is prolonged but considering they are zombies at that point, it's not really living.

If you're clamoring for zombie-like science, read about how [scientists are resurrecting 100-million-year-old underwater lifeforms](#). After that, read about how a [bionic moon jellyfish was created by scientists](#) earlier this year.

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