

UAH Deans' Lab Looking for Collaborators for Japanese Beetle Biocontrol Project

The Deans' Lab at the University of Alabama Huntsville (Biological Science Department) is currently working on a USDA-funded project to document the presence of *Ovavesicula popilliae*, a fungal pathogen of Japanese beetle (JB), in northern Alabama. This pathogen has great potential as a biocontrol agent that can provide safe and effective long-term control of JB populations. *O. popilliae* spores persist in the soil and are ingested by grubs while feeding. The pathogen then colonizes and replicates in their hindgut, leading to dysfunction. Infection increases overwintering grub mortality by 50% and further reduces the reproductive output in surviving adults by 50%. Research shows that once *O. popilliae* is established in an area, JB populations decrease by an average of 30% in the first six years and by 75% after 18 years. We hope to further develop *O. popilliae* as an affordable biocontrol option for growers. This pathogen is species-specific- it doesn't infect any other insects- and can over time reduce the need for expensive chemical controls, particularly in areas where pollinator health is a concern.

We are currently looking for sites in northern and central Alabama to trap adult beetles. Ideal sites include those that exhibit consistent JB infestations and/or are near irrigated turf. We use traps with a pheromone lure to attract adults, and we only leave traps out for 24 hours. If you have issues with JB throughout the growing season and would be amenable to letting us set up a trap on your property, please contact us. We would greatly appreciate your help!

If you want to learn more about the project, visit: <https://www.carrie-deans.com/jb-project>
While you're there, check out our Scarab Citizen Science Project as well!

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<https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/ENT-46>



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<https://www.fairwaygreeninc.com/japanese-beetles/>