**Keeping a chicken by your side could prevent malaria**

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**Keeping a chicken by your side could provide protection against malaria, research has shown.**

Scientists have discovered that malaria-carrying mosquitoes are put off by the smell of certain species, including chickens.

Having the birds around could help prevent humans from being bitten, they believe.

Professor Rickard Ignell, from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, said: "We were surprised to find that malaria mosquitoes are repelled by the odours emitted by chickens.

"This study shows for the first time that malaria mosquitoes actively avoid feeding on certain animal species, and that this behaviour is regulated through odour cues."

Scientists, working in Ethiopia, tested the insects to find out what kind of blood they fed on.

Malaria mosquitoes, known as Anopheles arabiensis, showed a taste for human blood over that of animals, when feeding indoors.

Outdoors, the insects randomly fed on cattle, goats and sheep - but always steered clear of chickens.

Further tests showed that the mosquitoes avoided traps placed next to cages containing live chickens and those baited with compounds from chicken feathers, the Malaria Journal reported.

Dr Ignell added: "People in sub-Saharan Africa have suffered considerably under the burden of malaria over an extended period of time and mosquitoes are becoming increasingly physiologically resistant to pesticides, while also changing their feeding habits for example by moving from indoors to outdoors.

"For this reason there is a need to develop novel control methods. In our study, we have been able to identify a number of natural odour compounds which could repel host-seeking malaria mosquitoes and prevent them from getting in contact with people."