

CLOSE UP



PESTICIDE PUZZLER

Colorado potato beetles have plagued farmers around the world since the late 19th century. The bugs are extra tough to kill because of their annoying habit of quickly developing resistance to pesticides. To better fight the beetles, University of Wisconsin-Madison entomologist Sean Schoville helped sequence their genome — only to find it resembled the genomes of less-resistant beetles. “It wasn’t diversifying their genome, adding new genes, that would explain rapid pesticide evolution,” he says. “So it leaves us with a whole bunch of new questions.” But Schoville’s team did find a kind of genetic insecticide, giving farmers a way to target the beetles’ cellular machinery.

— ERNIE MASTROIANNI; PHOTO BY ZACH COHEN