CORONAVIRUS VACCINE READY FOR TESTING

The coronavirus vaccine developed in Wageningen is now being tested on mice. It is a reserve vaccine, says Gorben Pijlman.

Pijlman, a researcher at the Laboratory for Virology, is working on the development of a coronavirus vaccine in a European project. Two potential vaccines are being developed in the project: a Danish one and a Wageningen one. The Danish vaccine has been selected for further development: the Wageningen one is a reserve vaccine. 'We are continuing to develop it just in case the Danish vaccine doesn't work as well as expected,' says Pijlman.

'Most vaccines fail in the testing phase'

The Danish partner has worked fast to develop a candidate vaccine that involves producing a piece of coronavirus protein in the cells of fruit flies and then attaching it to a nanoparticle. Initial tests in mice indicate that the immune response to this vaccine is very good, says Pijlman. This vaccine has now been handed over to the EU project's industrial partner, who is going to produce it. The Danish vaccine will be tested in three phases over the coming months.

Plan B

Although the Danish vaccine is highly promising, we should not count our chickens before they hatch, says Pijlman. 'Most vaccines fail during the testing phase because they do not provide enough protection or they have severe side effects.' For this reason, the European research group is continuing to develop the Wageningen vaccine as a Plan B.

The Wageningen vaccine is based on the spikes on the coronavirus, which are recreated by baculoviruses. This vaccine is ready too, and is now being tested on mice. WUR hope to publish the results of the tests on mice at the end of this year. AS