



Sponges can be grown

Growing sponges in a culture medium has long seemed impossible, but now a Wageningen researcher has managed it.

Sponges are fascinating organisms. Not only can they live for an extremely long time (up to 11,000 years old!), they also contain all kinds of interesting substances: compounds to combat viruses, bacteria, tumours – you name it. The sponge medicine cabinet is highly valuable, but you do need to

The sponge medicine cabinet is highly valuable

be able to grow them. And no one had managed that until recently. Now

researcher Kylie van Deinsen-Hesp has been able to grow *Geodia barretti*, a common deep-sea sponge. She recently got her PhD for this breakthrough. She gave her thesis the title *Dawn of a New Era in Sponge Biotechnology*. Developing a cell line paves the way for producing numerous new medicines.

Animal cells

The PhD candidate used a culture medium that was based on a known medium for culturing animal cells. In subsequent steps, she optimized the medium to obtain continuous cell division. Van Deinsen-Hesp thinks the culture medium should work for lots of other sponges too. 'It's a good basis at any rate. It'll just need to be optimized for the specific sponge.' RK