
Corporate Contributions to Classical Biological Control of Weeds

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Started in 1986, Biological Control of Weeds, Inc. (BCW) was the first company in the United States to market many previously established yet poorly distributed phytophagous biological control agents. Noah and Leona Poritz recognized that a void existed between biological control of weeds research and widespread field implementation for many agents. They felt that a commercial enterprise would best fill this void on a national basis. Commercialization allowed all levels of the agricultural and land management sectors to obtain a ready supply of formerly scarce or unavailable biological control agents.

BCW's redistribution efforts resulted in private, state and Federal biological control implementation to increase dramatically. Private cattle producers, most of which had no prior bio-control experience, now routinely implement non-chemical weed control on their ranches. Land managers and weed control professionals, who initially purchased agents from BCW, now annually redistribute these species intra- and interstate.

BCW has redistributed more phytophagous insects than any non-governmental entity in the history of the United States.

BCW's educational outreach to the consumer was emphasized as a means of promoting the benefits and explaining the limitations of biological control. Presentations to producer groups, weed control professionals, and university students increased awareness of this weed control method. One example of BCW's educational outreach has been ongoing for the past three years. Noah has provided general entomology instruction and biological control of weeds field education to students enrolled at the University of Virginia's Undergraduate Research Education Program at the Blandy Experimental Farm in northern Virginia. This program provides students with opportunities to conduct scientific research in areas such as insect-host plant interaction and insect population ecology. Newspaper and magazine articles supplemented BCW's educational efforts. BCW's web site, www.bio-control.com, provides a worldwide public education presence.

BCW provides financial and in kind support to a variety of local, state, regional and international entities. Most money is used for educational purposes. The CAB International Institute of Biological Control used BCW's contributions to support host-specificity testing of new agents.

BCW has also provided financial contributions to organizations that support economically disadvantaged women and children. In addition, BCW annually employs temporary labor from homeless shelters and centers for the developmentally disabled. BCW makes strong efforts to employ individuals in the greatest financial need and to provide wages above the local prevailing rates in those regions of the country.

BCW's overwhelming success stimulated competition between commercial suppliers in the late 1990's. Together, these businesses redistribute approximately a million agents representing over forty phytophagous species against twenty-two target weeds annually.

Insects are commercially available for a variety of target weeds including *Cirsium arvense*, *Centaurea maculosa*, *C. diffusa*, *C. solstitialis*, *Carduus nutans*, *Hypericum perforatum*, *Euphorbia esula*, *Senecio jacobaea*, and *Chondrilla juncea* to mention a few.

Noah is also a professional photographer specializing in live insects. He regularly shoots photographs of insects for research scientists' publication and presentation needs. His work is published in textbooks and magazines worldwide. BCW also markets an educational slide series of North America's worst exotic weeds and the phytophagous agents that attack them. The seventy slide series includes most agent life stages and the host plant damage inflicted by these agents. University extension, weed district personnel and state and Federal land managers frequently use this slide series for bio-control education purposes.

BCW is an active member of the Association of Natural Bio-Control Producers and supports numerous state and national weed control organizations with its membership.