Protocol for projects on classical biological control of weeds with insects

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A protocol for projects on classical biological control with insects was developed by European Biological Control Laboratory (EBCL) staff to help biocontrol workers and biocontrol consumers. The general problem of finding, evaluating and eventually introducing a biological control agent is a complex process formed by unequal parts: politics, administration and science. All process includes eight phases where several agencies at different levels, federal, state and University, are involved. First phase involves information on targets; second phase, selection of potential agents; third phase, overseas explorations, collections and research; fourth phase, importation into USA for further study and evaluation; fifth phase, release and establishment in the USA and elsewhere; sixth phase, evaluation in USA of agents released involving State, University Region, and County authority; seventh phase, evaluation in USA, ARS State agencies methodology of development and rearing of selected agents to be released; and eighth phase, evaluation study in USA ARS State biological and ecological aspects such as biology, economic impact and competition study.

Weed biological control evaluation process in the United States - past and present

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Starting in 1957, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) implemented outside agency reviews to evaluate the introduction of weed biological control agents. A group of five agencies were identified as the Subcommittee on Biological Control of Weeds and ascertained if targeted plants were weeds and identified non-target test plants that should be examined for host specificity. During the 1960s, the group expanded and began to exchange information between the USA and Canada. In 1971, the subcommittee became the Working Group on Biological Control of Weeds (WGBCW) with the addition of four agencies. Also, information exchange began with Mexico. In 1987, the group was revised, becoming the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) of Biological Control Agents of Weeds. It is currently composed of 17 organizations and Canada and Mexico officials and provides guidance and recommendations to researchers and regulators. From 1987 through 2005, the TAG reviewed 153 petitions, with 105 petitions requesting the release of biological control agents. Recent examinations have identified that 57% of the first-release petitions received a favourable recommendation. Through the re-evaluation process, eventually over 75% of the agents that were initially requested for release received favourable release recommendations.