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Biological Control of Canada Thistle: Phase III ... Testing Local Crops for Damage by Canada Thistle Insects

The purpose of this phase of the project was to see if the insects used to control Canada thistle would attack some of the local crops grown in our area. I predicted that the Canada thistle insects would not attack local crops. I also wanted to analyze and provide final results on the overall control of the Canada thistle stand after three years of insect activity. At the beginning of the 2008 growing season, I planted pinto beans, wheat, and sunflowers into my Phase I release site to see if the Canada thistle insects would attack them. I went to my original release site twice a week for the entire growing season to analyze the planted crops for insect damage. I looked for galls on the stems, leaf damage, and evidence of stem mining. Final analysis of the planted crops at the end of the growing season found that the Canada thistle insects did not attack them. This proves that the use of the insects in agricultural fields to control Canada thistle in our area will not have any negative impacts on production of common agricultural crops. Stand evaluation and plant counts in the original release site after three years of insect activity shows that the Canada thistle population was reduced by 41% from the start of my three year project.