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Environmental safety of biological control: Policy and practice in New Zealand

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Abstract

Introduction of biological control agents into New Zealand is regulated under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 (HSNO). The legislation is strongly focused on the health and safety of people and the environment. HSNO is implemented by the Environmental Risk Management Authority, a quasi-judicial body of 6–8 people appointed by the Minister for the Environment. The process by which biological control applications are received and processed is described. Two case studies of weed biological control agents which have been through the HSNO process, and the scientific issues that arose in considering the environmental safety of these agents are discussed. The case studies presented are the applications to release the gall fly *Procecidochares alani* (Diptera: Tephritidae) to control mist flower *Ageratina riparia*, and three biological control agents, *Macrolabis pilosellae* (Diptera: Cecidomyiidae), *Cheilisia urbana*, and *Cheilisia psilophthalma* (Diptera: Syrphidae) for biological

control of hawkweeds (*Hieracium* spp.). Both applications were approved for agent release into the environment.



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Keywords

Biological control safety; Environmental Risk Management Authority; ERMA New Zealand; Biological control regulation; Nontarget effects; Case studies

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