

“Development of a biological control program for common tansy”

Project No. 0007-053

Research Institution: Alberta Invasive Plant Council

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Objectives: To investigate whether insects can be used to control common tansy without herbicides or cultivation.

Background: Common tansy is an invasive, toxic, perennial, European plant that grows in uncultivated land (pastures, riparian areas, rights of way, parks, and natural areas). It reduces pasture quality and productivity and displaces native plant communities. In recent years it has also been spreading rapidly into the forested areas of northern Alberta. Chemical control options for common tansy are limited because it often grows near water bodies and in remote locations that are difficult and expensive to access.

These researchers plan to collect weevils, beetles, moths and midges in areas of Europe with similar climate to North American areas

where tansy is a problem. The effect of these control agents on common tansy survival, growth, spread and seed production will be measured. These insects will also be tested on closely related plants to ensure that they are specific to common tansy. If some of these agents show potential to be safe and effective, the appropriate government agencies will be approached to obtain release permits. This project is scheduled to be completed in 2009.

Implications of the Research: An effective biological control would help to manage this weed in pastures and haylands that are near water, or that would be negatively affected by broadleaf herbicides.

Photo courtesy of Alberta Invasive Plant Council

