

## NEW ZEALAND PLANT PROTECTION SOCIETY RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIP



Michael Cripps was awarded the 2006/07 New Zealand Plant Protection Society Research Scholarship. He is a PhD student at Lincoln University and was the recipient of a fellowship awarded by the National Centre for Advanced Bio-Protection Technologies. His research aims to test the impacts of natural enemies on the population dynamics of Californian thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). Michael is currently working in co-operation with CABI Bioscience in Switzerland in an effort to conduct a biogeographic comparison of the natural enemy impacts on Californian thistle in the native (Europe) and introduced (New Zealand) ranges.

His research will verify the commonly claimed importance of natural enemy release as a mechanism facilitating plant invasion success. In addition, results of his research will advance our understanding of multi-trophic interactions, and the importance of generalist versus specialist herbivores in regulating plant populations.

Experimental plots have been established where insects and fungi are present, or excluded, with the use of pesticides. Relative differences in plant growth performance between the native and invasive ranges will test the enemy release hypothesis, and provide pertinent information on the potential for classical biological control of Californian thistle.