The History and Current Situation With *Cactoblastis Cactorum* In Australia

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Cactoblastis cactorum were imported into Australia in 1925 to control what was the worst invasive species ever to affect Australia in the 19th Century. Non-native pest pears from the genus *Opuntia* had spread in sixty years to cover 24 million ha of Queensland and New South Wales with densities of plants up to 16,000 plants per ha and an estimated biomass of 250,000 kg per ha. The area infested with pears was greater than the total area under crops across the country at the time.

After mass-rearing the imported moths in four dedicated facilities, a large workforce delivered a coordinated program releasing over 2 billion egg sticks in a 4 year period across the entire range of the *Opuntia* invasion. Within ten years most of the infested area had returned to productive use. The cost of biological control program, £240,000 (1924-36) = $700 million today, but was equal to 0.2% of comparable chemical control program and the value of agricultural production in infested area today is $1.41 billion.

The success of this program provides a poster child for the technique of classical biological control. The larvae of *Cactoblastis cactorum* are not considered pests in Australia; rather they are memorialised in books, sculptures and buildings.