

PRESS RELEASE

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The US Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs (DOI-OIA) has awarded \$239,994 to the University of Guam College of Natural and Applied Sciences in response to a grant proposal entitled Establishment of Self-sustaining Biological Control of Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle Biotype G in Micronesia submitted by UOG entomologist Dr. Aubrey Moore.



Dr. Aubrey Moore feeds a solution containing the naturally occurring insect virus OrNV to coconut rhinoceros beetles. This proven bio-control agent has been successfully used to control CRB populations. Dr. James Grasela is working to find the appropriate strain of the virus that will be effective for the biotype of beetle decimating coconut trees around Guam.

Funding from the grant will be used for partial support of an existing project aimed at implementing self-sustaining control of coconut rhino beetles (CRB) throughout Guam by introducing an insect disease caused by a naturally occurring insect virus which infects only rhino beetles. This virus is called *Oryctes rhinoceros nudivirus*, or OrNV for short. Different strains of OrNV have been very effective in providing long-lasting control of rhino beetles on many Pacific islands. Typically, after the virus is introduced into the CRB population, damage to coconut palms and other palms falls to very low levels within a few months and it stays at those low levels indefinitely.

Part of the grant funding will be used to pay the salary of Dr. James Grasela, an insect pathologist who has spent his career finding ways to control pest insects with insect diseases instead of poisoning them with insecticides. Grasela has been working under a contract at the University of Guam for the past two years under a previous DOI-OIA grant. He has screened OrNV strains collected from several locations in the Asia-Pacific region and has found two that have potential for controlling the biotype causing so much damage on Guam, CRB-G.

For more information regarding research on CRB and other insects conducted by scientists at the University of Guam, please visit <https://www.uog.edu/wptrc/entomology>.

For detailed information on the recent grant award, you can download Moore's grant proposal from:

https://github.com/aubreymoore/2020-DOI-CRB-Biocontrol/blob/master/doi_proposal.pdf

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