

3. Buffelgrass, an invasive grass species in southwestern desert ecosystems, is threatening the saguaro cactus, a keystone species in these ecosystems. Buffelgrass is drought-tolerant and can survive wildfires. However, the dry buffelgrass also acts as fuel for wildfires, causing the fires to be more severe. Older saguaro cacti can survive wildfires; however, many of the young cacti cannot.

Scientists conducted an experiment to determine whether they could control the abundance of the buffelgrass population. The scientists identified several native grass species that, when grown with buffelgrass, might reduce the abundance of buffelgrass. They grew buffelgrass in the presence of several different native grass species in greenhouses, in either nondrought (watered every 3 days) or drought (watered every 9 days) conditions. After twelve weeks, they measured the height and dry weight of the buffelgrass in each treatment group.

- A. **Describe** the effect that removing a keystone species will have on an ecosystem.
- B. **Identify** a control group the scientists should include in their experiment.
- C. **State** the null hypothesis of the experiment in which buffelgrass is grown in the presence of native grass species.
- D. Scientists have found that the population growth rates of native grasses are much slower than the population growth rate of buffelgrass following a wildfire. The scientists claim that wildfires will therefore increase the abundance of buffelgrass plants in the ecosystem. Based on the information given, **justify** the scientists' claim.

3. As part of a new suburban development, a sports complex consisting of athletic fields and buildings is constructed in a formerly wooded area.
- (a) **Predict** ONE ecological consequence on the local plant community that is likely to result during the site preparation and construction of the sports complex. **Justify** your prediction.
- (b) To maintain the playing fields, large quantities of water and chemicals are applied regularly to the grass-covered areas. **Predict** ONE effect on the local animal community that might result from regular use and maintenance of the playing fields. **Justify** your prediction.