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The heart of the matter—the quarantine insectary

A sophisticated quarantine insectary, completed recently for the Department of Agriculture at its South Perth headquarters, will be the hub of biological control research in Western Australia. It is designed to allow biological control agents to be imported directly and reared under disease-free conditions.

It will shorten dramatically the process involved in introducing live organisms from overseas, while maintaining maximum security so they can be reared in quarantine until healthy colonies are established. Nothing will be released into the field until entomologists are satisfied completely that the colony is free from accidental introductions. Even the air will be filtered to prevent unwanted diseases or other active organisms from entering and moving.

The new building has had to fulfil an impressive list of requirements to qualify as an effective unit.

It has to be disease and insect 'tight'. Without strict security, undesirable organisms which may have been brought in inadvertently with the other living material . . . such as host

plants, hyperparasites and disease . . . could escape. Therefore the building is equipped with an oven to burn packing material and the like.

Staff must shower and change their clothing before entering and leaving the building. It is compartmented, with negative and positive air pressure to ensure that when doors are opened there is no threat of spores or other organisms escaping from one area to another. The outside windows are double-glazed and wire-reinforced.

Once the parasites or other organisms are installed in the laboratory it is crucial that they be reared or maintained in the best possible condition. Atmospheric and light conditions within the rearing rooms must be adjusted to suit both the host, which the organisms have to parasitise, and the parasites themselves. Each area must be disease-free, so all equipment must be disinfected through washing, heating, fumigating or ultra-violet radiation.

Each rearing room can be washed and fumigated if necessary between programmes.



■ The new quarantine insectary.

■ Left: Laboratory assistant Judy Henson shows Minister for Agriculture Mr. R. C. Old, how a laminar flow steriliser works.

■ Entomologist P. Michael helped plan the building's layout.

