



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 4

Volume 22
Number 2 1981

Article 18

1-1-1981

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J K. Scott

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Recommended Citation

Scott, J K. (1981) "Dock control is subject of overseas study," *Journal of the Department of Agriculture, Western Australia, Series 4: Vol. 22 : No. 2 , Article 18.*
Available at: https://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/journal_agriculture4/vol22/iss2/18

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...again the following year.



Dock control is subject of overseas study

■ Dr J. K. Scott

*Weeds of the dock and sorrel family (**Rumex**) will be the subject of an intensive biological control study over the next three years.*

Dr J. K. Scott, a Western Australian science graduate who majored in zoology and botany before joining the Department of Agriculture's Entomology Branch, will go to France to seek insect predators to destroy these weeds. The funding is provided mainly by the Australian Meat Research Committee, and Cattle Industry Compensation Fund.

He will be based with the CSIRO Biological Control Unit at Montpellier, in the region where the docks and sorrel originated.

His assignment started with a careful survey of *Rumex* weeds in Western Australia. With the assistance of the Weed Agronomy Branch, he has identified the species which occur in Western Australia, to ensure that the same weeds are examined in the search for suitable predatory insects in southern France.

In his first year overseas, Dr Scott will concentrate on locating plants of *Rumex* species which are weeds in Western Australia, and collecting any promising insects.

In the second year of the project he will study the biology of these insects and devise methods of rearing them in the laboratory.

He will devote the third year to 'screening' the insects against a range of plant species, including those of agricultural importance in Australia, and any native plants of related species. The purpose of this work will be to ensure that there is no likelihood of introduced insects causing harmful effects in Australia.

Before he returns to Western Australia, Dr Scott will send insects of selected species to the Department's new quarantine insectary for further testing, rearing and 'bulking up'.

This pre-release stage could represent another two years of work. But it reflects the entomologists' concern that no biological control agents should be released until stringent safeguards have cleared them of any potential threat to agriculture or the environment.