

Leafminer faces fire

By IAN ABBOTT

THE benefits of using a moderate-intensity fire in Autumn to control the jarrah leafminer plague in the lower northern jarrah forest are now being researched.

The Forest Entomology Research Team from the Como Research Centre recently marked out transects and set up special traps in Proprietary Block, Collie District.

The hypothesis under test is that a single Autumn fire, entailing scorch of every jarrah crown, will set back the leafminer by at least one year and permit each tree to develop a dense crown.

The experiment will also provide detailed data about the rate of re-infestation of leafminer after such a fire and any subsequent deterioration in crown condition.

Collie District staff will conduct the Autumn 1989 fire over an area of 240ha, the first time in WA that forest entomological research has experimented at an operational scale.

Another first was that technical assistants Paul Van Heurck and Tom Burbidge used wheelbarrows to distribute 90 bulky leafminer traps over 4.8km of transects.

Fortunately, the sandy soils of the Collie Basin were an ideal substrate.