

LERP OUTBREAK CAUSES CONCERN

By JANET FARR

AN outbreak of lerps (*Cardiaspina brunnea*) on flat-topped yate has concerned growers in the Lower Great Southern area since 1980.

Lerps to the uninitiated are tiny creatures which live on leaves under a sugary roof and tap into the plant's phloem, much like aphids.

The flat-topped yate is important in lowering water table levels in order to reduce salinity in the southern cereal-sheep growing region of WA.

The lerp outbreak was first recorded in June 1982 at Kebaringup and since then severe damage has been evident throughout the range of flat-topped yate.

Tree crowns turn brown and appear as if they have been scorched by fire.

Dr Ian Abbott, John Humphries and I visited the outbreak area during July 4

to 8, to investigate the progress and severity of the festation.

Areas visited included Mount Barker, Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe, Ongerup, Gnowangerup, Tambellup, Cranbrook and Fitzgerald.

Trees were inspected on farm properties and along roadside verges, and severe damage was observed in 1986 foliage.

In many areas older trees had responded to the severity of lerp attack by producing a high proportion of epicormic growth.

Only minor damage was observed on the 1987 leaves and few lerp juveniles were collected on the trip.

However, from

knowledge of lerp outbreaks in the Eastern States, future outbreaks in the Lower Great Southern region are very likely to occur.

This history and extent of the outbreak was discussed with the Soil Conservation Advisory Committee for Jerramungup and local farmers.

It was the opinion of most farmers that the outbreak was the result of low rainfall in past years.

Correlation of the outbreak with spraying for grasshopper control was also mentioned.

The farmers were enthusiastic concerning CALM's proposed research programme on the lerp.

Research of the lerp's biology and the cause of outbreaks will be conducted by CALM's Entomology team based in Manjimup.

The programme will incorporate monitoring lerp populations on flat-topped yate stands situated on a number of cereal-sheep properties and in the Stirling Ranges and Fitzgerald National Park.

Mapping issue relay challenge

THE gauntlet is down and the challenge is on for CALM's second Big Brook Relay on October 15.

Mapping Maniacs are joining the fray this year and, fresh from a win in the

get the bowl to match 1987's toilet seat shield.

Manjimup District, on the other hand, will be striving hard to keep their crown and the Karri All Sports Trophy.

Whoever wins — or loses