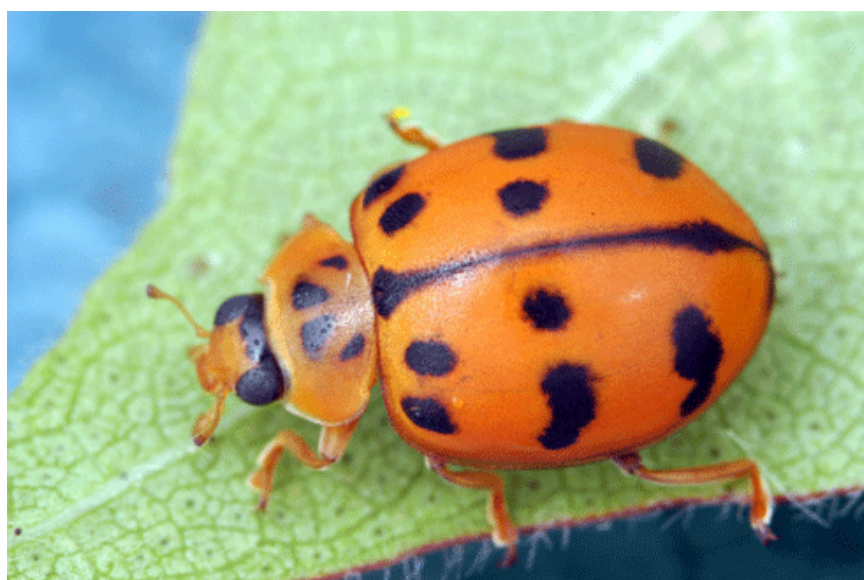


Native plants may help control grain pests

New research is providing grain growers with a new tool for insect pest management – remnant native vegetation.



Credit: CSIRO/scienceimage

Preliminary findings from the national project – led by CSIRO and funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) – have shown that damaging insect pests were more likely to be found on weeds, while beneficial insects were more likely to be found on native plant species.

The first stage of the research involved field work in Western Australia's Great Southern region; research is also being carried out at Dalby in Queensland and Cootamundra in New South Wales.

CSIRO researcher Hazel Parry, who analysed the WA data, said beneficial insects were three times more likely than pest species to be found in remnant native vegetation.

She is now using computer simulations of landscapes to understand which management practices – within crops and pastures as well as native vegetation – affect pest populations by encouraging beneficial insects or reducing sources of pests.

'This information may be useful for growers thinking about revegetation options on their land,' Dr Parry said.

'The initial results from WA suggest that native vegetation that is well managed, is not over-grazed and has an intact under and middle plant storey has less weeds and harbours fewer pests.'

The WA field research was led by Department of Agriculture and Food (DAFWA) researcher, Svetlana Micic.

'Remnant bushland containing few weeds may reduce the number of pest species and at least delay the build-up of

pests in crops during the growing season,' Ms Micic said.

'In our studies, weeds likely to host pests included nightshade, capeweed, fleabane, mustard, wild radish and weed grasses.'

Source: GRDC

From **ECOS** online <http://www.ecosmagazine.com/?paper=EC13013>