

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE IN WEED CONTROL PRACTICE

M. De Bryon-Fares, D. Prescott and J. Strang
Department of Agriculture, New South Wales

Most members of rural communities are interested in weeds. Sometimes this interest stems from botanical curiosity and sometimes is a spin-off from the interest shown in properties by Weeds Officers. Regardless of the motivating influence, there remains a substantial community awareness of the need for adequate control measures of noxious weeds.

In all areas of community concern there is a tendency to defer to experts or authorities. One authority for information regarding noxious weeds ought to be the Weeds Officer. How do these people get their expertise? Up to date they have got it on the job, as, at least in New South Wales, local government Weeds Officers have no formal, specialized education available. Each council just appoints its officers according to its own criteria.

This position is changing because the New South Wales Department of Agriculture, in conjunction with the N.S.W. Department of Technical and Further Education, is developing a correspondence course in Weed Control Practice. It is hoped that this course will be offered to students early in 1976 through the College of External Studies. Students should be able to complete the course in 1 year, but, as with all College of External Studies courses, each student will be self-pacing. The concept of 'self-pacing' is essential to the success of the course because Weeds Officers have diverse educational backgrounds, and are subject to unique pressures in their homes and work contexts.

The Weed Control Practice course is being written under the supervision of the College of External Studies. The course will cover the identification and control of weeds, communications, and the application of the law in weed control.

Units on the identification and control of weeds are being written by officers of the N.S.W. Department of Agriculture, and the units covering the application of the law in weed control are being written by a legal officer from the Department of Local Government. The communications strand is being written by a full-time teacher of business communications from Sydney Technical College. The major innovations in course design are in the communications area.

The communications strand will be completely integrated into