

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Attention: News Editor

### **Africa trip reveals helpful Aussie wasp**

New ways to control the invasive weed Sydney golden wattle could arise from a research trip to South Africa by 2011 GSDC Medal for Excellence in NRM winner John Moore.

Mr Moore, a weed control scientist with the Department of Agriculture, used \$5000 of the \$10,000 Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) grant he received as part of the medal win to fly to South Africa to investigate weed control.

He said the introduced Sydney golden wattle was a problem in South Africa as it was in Western Australia, particularly in the Great Southern where it has shown invasive properties not seen in its native habitats in the eastern states.

“Cape Town’s climate is similar to southern WA and the South Africans have weed problems that include Sydney golden wattle as well as a number of WA wattles that were introduced in the past,” Mr Moore said.

“South African scientists have been using a gall wasp and a seed weevil, originally from New South Wales, as biological control of their introduced wattles.

“Together they severely restrict the plant’s seed production and limit the rate of infestation.

“Biological control of Sydney golden wattle was previously discounted in WA because everyone assumed that biological control agents from the eastern states would also affect our own wattle species.

“However, the South Africans are observing that the gall wasp and the seed weevil do not affect the WA species – unfortunate for them, but potentially good news for the Great Southern,” Mr Moore said.

Scientists suggest that the genetic make-up of Sydney golden wattle might differ enough from local wattle species to make it the sole target of the gall wasp if the wasp were released in WA.

Mr Moore said releasing any biological agent required extensive testing of potential effects on other plants, but in this case the South Africans already had some of the necessary data.



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GSDC Chief Executive Officer Bruce Manning said Mr Moore's research held great promise.

"Sydney golden wattle is taking over significant areas of native bush in the Great Southern and by some estimates it could invade up to 80 per cent of bushland if it is left unchecked," Mr Manning said.

"Finding an environmentally sound way to reduce its spread or even begin to eliminate Sydney golden wattle would be a huge benefit to the region.

"The GSDC Medal is all about honouring and supporting excellence in natural resource management and it is wonderful to think that it might help to find a long-term solution to this problem weed," Mr Manning said.

Mr Moore said gaining approval to release a biological control could take up to five years.

Mr Moore used the other \$5000 of his GSDC Medal grant to help develop a quadcopter-mounted herbicide sprayer that can combat Sydney golden wattle and other invasive weeds in inaccessible areas.

**Media contacts:     Bruce Manning, ph. 9842 4888**  
**John Moore, ph. 9892 8444**