

In response to need, a history of the Western Australian Department of Agriculture - 1894 to 2008

E N. Fitzpatrick

Chapter 9

Some significant people of the Department of Agriculture Western Australia

<http://researchlibrary.agric.wa.gov.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?filename=8&article=1005&context=books&type=additional>



Olga May Goss Having won an Exhibition to study science at the University of WA, Olga Goss graduated with a BSc with honours in zoology. After a short period as a lecturer and demonstrator at the university and working as a pathologist at the Children's Hospital, Olga then joined the Department in 1945 as a plant pathologist. In her 35 years of service she worked on a wide range of issues, particularly in the early years when there were only two other plant pathologists. Olga retired in 1980 as a highly respected senior plant pathologist. She took a particular interest in nematodes and published papers on eelworm infection of potatoes and other vegetables and also took the leading role in the investigation of eelworm problems in viticulture, orchards and cereals. Olga pioneered the control of nematodes on bananas at Carnarvon and showed the importance of using resistant rootstocks in viticulture and orchards. She identified the existence of resistance to eelworm infection rootstocks of peach trees and also summarised the overall position of eelworm in WA and the available control measures. Prior to the advent of commercial production, Olga also oversaw the provision of a wide range of Rhizobia to other researchers and to the farming community. Her other great interest was in nursery hygiene and she published a handbook on this subject drawing on local, interstate and overseas experience. In recognition of Olga's contribution in this field she was honoured with the Australian Nurseryman's Award in 1978 and in the same year was elected Nurseryman of the Year.

Plant pathologist Olga Goss was closely involved with the early work on eelworm infestation and had a close association with the nursery industry. Olga was also a ground breaker and was the only female member of the professional staff. Initially she was rarely allowed to make field trips because it was thought that growers would be reluctant to accept advice from a young girl. Ironically, she spent most of her working life on farms assisting growers with their problems. At first she was not permitted to spend a night away from the office. The final problem was that she was not as well paid as male graduates in comparable positions.

[Woman's Day Hall of Fame 2017](#)