



press clip

Keeping disease in check

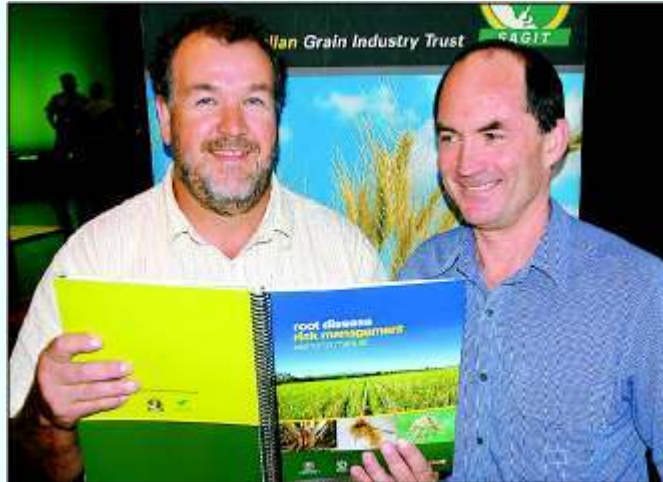
THE battle to keep root diseases in check has been boosted through a series of workshops supported by the South Australian Grains Industry Trust and Plant Health Australia.

More than 190 agronomists from SA, Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia attended South Australian Research and Development Institute run root disease management workshops, which examined accurate ways to sample soils, best practice in interpreting test results and options for managing diseases.

The training, complete with a comprehensive manual, included a new module on biosecurity provided by Plant Health Australia, aimed at increasing agronomist awareness of the risk from exotic pests and diseases.

Also covered were details of the PreDicta B testing service developed with SAGIT support.

This season SARDI has added new tests for stem nematode, a serious pest of oats and faba beans, and Phoma koolunga, a new component of the blackspot disease complex of peas. This brings the total number of pathogens tested for by PreDicta B to 11, including take-all, rhi-



ROOT DISEASE: Looking over a new root disease manual is South Australian Grains Industry Trust chairman Peter Kuhlmann and South Australian Research and Development Institute's Dr Alan McKay.

zoctonia barepatch, cereal cyst nematode, Pratylenchus, and crown rot.

SAGIT chairman Peter Kuhlmann said the training course and PreDicta B make a valuable contribution to farming industries.

"Knowing the risk of disease before sowing helps takes the guesswork out of crop selection," he said.

"Root diseases are all too common and interfere with root function, reducing a plant's ability to access water and nutrients.

"The tests help to flag the risk of crop root diseases in a paddock, so it becomes

clearer which crops to avoid or perhaps consider to safeguard income."

Dr Alan McKay said the service will continue to be accessed through accredited agronomists familiar with regional crop choices and farm practices.

Dr McKays' team, working with colleagues at CSIRO, have been developing PreDicta B for the past 10 years with support from the SA Grains Industry Trust. The team has gained a global reputation as a leader in DNA testing to indicate the risk of soil-borne diseases to crops before they are sown.