

YEHUDA LEON WOLF



(1921-1981)  
*In Memoriam*

Yehuda Leon Wolf, the director of the Mammals, Birds and Snails Section in the Department of Plant Protection and Inspection of the Israel Ministry of Agriculture, and the undisputed expert on vertebrate pest control in this country, died on May 2, 1981.

Wolf was born in Hannover, Germany, on November 24, 1921. After completing his studies at the Halberstadt Realgymnasium in 1938, he emigrated to England. There he studied in an agricultural school, but his studies were interrupted when World War II began. During 1943-1946 he worked as a District Pest Officer in the county of Buckingham, U.K. In 1948 he came to Israel and enlisted in the army; after the War of Independence Wolf decided to remain in Israel. On November 13, 1949, he began his distinguished 32 years of service in the Department of Plant Protection and Inspection.

Wolf was involved in vertebrate pest research and its application in the field. In addition, his work included, *inter alia*, teaching pest control operators, instructing farmers, organizing regional pest control operations, testing new pest control materials and issuing recommendations.

Yehuda Wolf's main activities were with rodents. During 1949-50 Israel was infested by field rodents, mainly voles (*Microtus guentheri*). The only means of control known at that time was to use wheat baits treated with thallium sulfate. The large-scale control operations carried out at the time were successful, but the chemical was found to accumulate in the environment. In 1964 Wolf was a member of a team (headed by Y. Naftali) which tested other possible chemicals for the control of field rodents. Fluoroacetamide was found to be the best for this purpose, and is still in use in Israel. In 1966 an albino jird, *Meriones tristami*, was discovered in the field. Wolf

and Naftali selected by inbreeding in the laboratory an albino strain of this jird, which proved to be a very convenient laboratory animal for toxicological tests.

Thanks to organized regional pest control activity the field rodent population in Israel was regulated and reduced to reasonable levels. Outbreaks of field rodents, which had previously occurred here every few years, have disappeared in the last 30 years. Wolf also became more and more active in urban rodent control, as well as in rat and mouse control in hen-houses and cattle-sheds. He instructed city pest control operators in proper control measures. The leaflets on control of rodents written by Yehuda Wolf constitute the only literature in Hebrew for pest control operators.

During March – September 1960 Wolf was the recipient of a F.A.O. fellowship in the U.K., France and Germany. In October 1966 he took an active part in the seminar on Rodents and Rodent Ectoparasites in Geneva, Switzerland, and in 1976 in the joint F.A.O./W.H.O./E.P.P.O. conference on Rodents of Agricultural and Public Health Concern, again in Geneva. On these occasions he established close contacts with vertebrate pest control experts and investigators from many countries. Wolf developed his section into the center of vertebrate pest control knowledge and know-how in Israel.

Wolf initiated numerous research projects that were conducted by his team in the Mammals, Birds and Snails Section, such as preventing damage of woodpeckers to polyethylene irrigation pipes, protecting fruits against birds and bats, and dispersing birds by broadcasting their distress calls.

Yehuda Wolf had not completed his formal academic studies, but nevertheless became the leading person in his field in Israel. His death brought a great loss to vertebrate control science in Israel.

*Shmuel Moran*