



Dung Beetles

Fact Sheet No. 1
June 2008

Dung beetles can remove a cowpat in a matter of hours by burying it in the ground. This rapid 'processing' can help to increase forage availability, reduce flies, control parasites and reduce the spread of animal disease.

At the same time, dung beetles can improve pasture health by returning valuable nutrients and organic material to the grass root zone of the soil. Dung beetles tunnel underground, which can result in greater water infiltration and retention and improve aeration and root penetration. Additionally the rapid removal of pats reduces fly breeding sites and therefore reduces flies.

Australia has some native dung beetles, but the ones that are able to feed on cowpats have had to be imported from Africa and Europe. Over 50 species were introduced to Australia under a CSIRO program in the 1960s.



Spiniger dung beetle: an autumn species the program has introduced to the Heytesbury Region in 2008.

The More the Merrier

Dung beetles are seasonally active. This means that a number of different species are required to ensure dung processing over the greater part of the year. Currently there are 3 highly active summer species in the Heytesbury region.

The Landcare Network has released 6 new species in 2008 to extend beetle activity from summer through to winter. These were introduced in Curdievale, Timboon, Simpson and Upper Curdies areas. There is currently no suitable species for introduction for the spring period.

**HEYTESBURY SOIL AND WATER
DAIRY ACTION PROGRAM**



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Beetle Life Cycle

Dung beetles cycle cow pats in 2 ways, the adult consumes the liquid fraction and rolls a ball of manure called a brood ball into which they lay 1 or 2 eggs. They may bury the brood ball up to 6

inches into the ground. They will repeat this for several weeks of their season. The next season the eggs will hatch out and the cycle will continue.

Beetles are very good flyers and will head to fresh cow pats so generally distribution in an area will happen in 3-5



Introducing dung beetles

Check which dung beetle species are already present, no point introducing more of the same. Dung beetles colonies can be purchased or relocated. Care needs to be taken if relocating beetle species, not to move pests also. The most effective method is to introduce a number of species, due to seasonal life cycles .

A neighbourhood approach will be more effective than individual farms as dung beetles can easily fly off.

Dung Beetle Safe Drench

The chemicals in drenches get into the manure. Some of these drenches can be toxic or detrimental to adult beetles or the eggs and larvae for weeks after their use. Check with your supplier that your drench is safe for the entire life cycle of beetles and not just the adult stage.

Key Messages:

- Have the highest number of species possible
- Select parasite control chemicals, insecticides and other farm chemicals for dung beetle friendliness
- A neighbourhood program will be more effective than individual farm approach

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