

Dung Beetles, Africa & Mother Nature

Nature is not wasteful. Given the opportunity, she will maximize the recycling of nutrients and the conservation of energy in all living systems. So, how does nature deal with huge quantities of manure?

Africa has the richest dung beetle fauna in the world, the beetles having evolved (over the last few million years) to exploit the abundance of dung produced by the large mammalian herbivores for which the continent is so famous.

About 2 000 dung beetle species are known in Africa, of which about 800 occur in southern Africa.

Any southern African farm with good pasture and stock management can expect to have between **60** and **100** species of dung beetles!! Not surprisingly, with so many different types of dung beetle, dung decomposition is effective and efficient.

All these African dung beetles would not have evolved and survived, if they didn't have a part to play in the recycling of manure. If this is nature's fine-tuned answer to manure recycling in Africa, then it's what we need to be aiming for in Australia, too.

Interested?

Contact us by phone/email and ask for a dung beetle project Information Pack.

Goulburn Broken Dung Beetle Project

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Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry
National Landcare Program



Upper Goulburn
Catchment Group



Goulburn Broken Catchment

Dung Beetle Project

- ✓ Are you interested in dung beetles?
- ✓ Can you offer new types of dung beetles a good home?

We need your help
to

**Improve the health
and sustainability of
our grazing-lands.**

Join us in this
exciting & important
community project?

What's the project about?

Landcare in the Goulburn Broken Catchment has received funding from the National Landcare Program to assist the introduction and spread of beneficial dung beetles. This project builds on several smaller dung beetle projects conducted by Landcare over previous years.

Currently, there are two species of introduced dung beetles that are widespread in the Goulburn Broken Catchment and both are summer-active. We aim to introduce many more types of dung beetles to our catchment (to spread dung beetle activity across all seasons), for the benefit of soil health, animal health and water quality (not to mention reduced bush fly numbers and reduced harrowing!) and we want to do this ASAP.

So, we are looking for farms on which to establish new species of dung beetles. These farms will act as 'nursery sites', where the new dung beetles can establish, build up numbers and then spread into neighbouring districts.

What's the hurry?

On their own, dung beetle populations spread fairly slowly (eg 2 to 4 km per year), so it may take many years for a new species to spread through a district and decades for a species to spread across the whole Goulburn Broken Catchment. By releasing large numbers of colonies in a short time, we will help the beetles to spread into all districts much more quickly.

Who can participate?

The project is open to all land-holders in the Goulburn Broken Catchment who:

- 4 Have a minimum of 30 to 40 head of stock (cows, horses).
- 4 Are committed to managing stock parasite loads in a dung beetle-friendly manner.

In 2006 priority will be given to landholders in the two targeted project areas (Upper Goulburn and Barmah-Undera-Sheep Pen Ck).

This year, with your support, we plan to release 20-30 starter colonies of summer-active dung beetles and 60-70 starter colonies of autumn-winter-spring-active dung beetles.

What's in it for the farmer?

The normal retail price of one 'starter colony' of dung beetles from Soilcam Ltd (our supplier) is about \$400 + gst. By purchasing starter colonies through this project you will be reimbursed half of the retail cost; you'll get a starter colony for about \$200. We'll also identify for you any dung beetle species you are able to collect from your farm. In exchange, we ask for your participation in regularly (eg. quarterly) collecting a sample of dung beetles from your property.

Participants will also receive up-to-date technical and educational information about dung beetles and their management. But, most importantly, you'll be playing an important part in spreading the multiple benefits that dung beetles will bring to the Goulburn Broken Catchment. And, you'll be the first to benefit!

And don't forget
The effectiveness of dung beetles working on your farm will be improved if your neighbours are looking after them too. So pass this pamphlet on.