

Dung Beetle Project

Boosting dung beetle activity in the Riverina Highlands

Dung Beetles have evolved to feed and breed in dung. Dung beetles in Australia either tunnel dung under the ground or roll it away in balls for burial into the ground, distributing the dung pads into the soil.

Dung beetles are one of the most beneficial insects to farmers. Through their rapid burial of dung, they provide significant economic, environmental, ecological and social benefits to not only the farm but also the wider catchment.



Dung beetles have preferences for specific climates and temperatures, with their activity highly dependent on climatic factors. This means in many areas, several species of dung beetles with complimentary periods of activity are required to achieve optimal dung burial throughout the year.

Although there are some dung beetle species already existing in the Riverina Highlands, they are not active in all seasons or across all properties.

*Every day,
the average cow produces 10 to 12
litres of dung per day.
This means Australia's
28.5 million cattle
produce over 285 million litres of
dung each day.*

Benefits of Dung Beetles

The rapid removal and processing of dung by dung beetles can result in many benefits including:

- Increased soil fertility by returning organic matter and nutrients to the soil
- Deepens topsoil by slowly cultivating and turning it over to a depth of 300mm, thereby producing an environment in which microbial activity thrives.
- Nutrients are then available to soil micro-organisms and to the grass root zone
- Provides a habitat and food supply for earthworms
- Increased soil aeration by creating tunnels into the soil both when burying dung and on emergence of new beetles



- Increased rain-water penetration and improves ground-water retention into the soil
- Increase pasture utilisation as livestock will not graze around dung pads
- Reduced nutrient run off into dams, streams and waterways and therefore reduced water contamination and algal blooms
- Reduced bush fly populations through the rapid burial of dung.
- Reduced reinfection of livestock by parasitic worms. This is achieved by dung beetles directly or indirectly killing the eggs and young larvae of the parasitic worms.