



Western Murray Land Improvement Group Inc

Dung Beetle Workshop



The Subject

Dung beetles play a critical role in the grazing ecosystem. WMLIG had Russ Barrow from Dung Beetle Ecosystem Engineers (DBEE) come along and present information about the advantages of Dung Beetles in agriculture and how people can start their own Dung Beetle Nursery and release them into the wild.

By harnessing the power of the dung beetle farmers can save money and reduce their carbon footprint.

Challenges and objectives

Many people don't know the advantages of having dung beetles present on their property. Often if you have livestock, whether it be cattle, sheep, or horses you will have dung beetles present sometimes without even knowing.

Solution

Russ explained how dung beetles are beneficial to farm including improving the flow of water, nutrients, and carbon into the root zone of the pasture which in turn improves the productivity. By burying the dung, the beetles prevent the build-up of flies, improving animal health, productivity and lifestyle conditions for graziers and surrounding conditions.

Other advantages include improved soil health, reduced water run-off, reduce livestock parasites, sequester carbon, and reduce emissions, improve pastures, and reduce bushfly and buffalo fly populations. The dung of affected animals is packed full of worm eggs and the larvae that hatch from the eggs are then consumed with the pasture by the livestock who are soon infected. As the dung beetles consume the dung, they kill the worm eggs and make the dung less favourable to the growth of worm larvae, giving producers natural parasite control.

The species that are best suited to our specific area are the Bubas bison and the Euoniticellus intermedius.

Results

Attendees found the information and presenters to be engaging and informative, giving the workshop on overall rating of 9.5 out of 10. From the workshop 100 per cent of attendees were likely to make changes to their business including:

- Increase and diversify dung beetle species on farm.
- Use the beetles to improve the soils for better outcomes.
- Investigate the feasibility of using dung beetle on farm.

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There are a 11 species of dung beetles present in the Murray Region that are active at various times of the year. They include:

- Bubas bison (winter, autumn, spring)
- Euoniticellus (summer, autumn, spring)
- Africanus
- Fulvus
- Intermedius
- Pallipes
- Geotrupes spiniger (autumn, winter, spring)
- Onitis (summer, autumn, spring)
- Aygulus
- Alexis
- Onthophagus binodis (summer, autumn, spring)
- Digitonthophagus gazella (summer, autumn, spring)
- Onthophagus taurus (summer, autumn, spring)

