

Lucyvale Better Beef Group Newsletter

Project Funded by *National Landcare Program*



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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

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Their feast our fertilizer
Their feast our future



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SPINIGER BEETLES: HARVEST & RELEASE

In March, Chips and Alf travelled to north-west Tasmania to harvest *Geotrupes spiniger* beetles. This was a fantastic learning opportunity, and we thank Dr Graeme Stevenson for sharing his considerable knowledge, equipment and expertise with us. Additional beetles were also supplied, resulting in approximately 15,000 *spiniger* beetles released in the valley during March. The Project has now released 48 beetle colonies, consisting of seven different species.

SPINIGER FACT FILE



Geotrupes spiniger beetle with wing covers (elytra) lifted and hind wings outstretched, as it prepares for flight.

Photo:
Courtesy of
Dr. Graeme
Stevenson.

Length: 20 -25mm

Colour: Black with a blue belly

Activity period of adults:

Autumn, early winter and spring

Tunnels: Generally more than 20cm

Flight time: Dusk and dawn

Adult life span: Approx. six months

Egg laying capacity: During warmer weather, approx. ten eggs per week.

BEETLE MONITORING

Each month the ten monitoring sites are visited and beetle activity is recorded. To date Heidi Josipovic has undertaken this task, however due to work commitments she will be unable to continue. We'd like to extend our thanks to Heidi for her contribution and wish her well in her new job. We would also like to welcome Sharon Roberts into the position.

We encourage all landholders to check dung pads and let us know what you find (or collect a specimen for identification).

BUBAS BISON TRIALS

There has been speculation that the Winter beetle, *Bubas bison* may have a two-year "egg to adult" development time in colder climates. Under the guidance of Dr Bernard Doube we are conducting trials to investigate this idea.

In August 2007, three onion bags were placed in holes in the ground and back-filled with soil. *Bison* beetle pairs and dung were added and the bags tied. Two of these bags were lifted in March and the brood balls examined. The beetles were still in the larval stage (1), rather than the pupal stage (2) or near adult stage (3). *Bison* beetles generally emerge in late April early May (depending on rainfall) so it would be expected that they would be close to the pupal/adult stage. Another bag will be lifted and examined in June.



Beetle Brood Balls

Stages of Development
1. Larvae
2. Pupae
3. Callow adult
4. Adult

Photo: Dr Bernard Doube

VISIT TO DR. BORNEMISSZA



Father of the CSIRO Dung Beetle Project

Photo: Andrew Pearce

Dr. George Bornemissza 8/4/08

Early in April I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Bornemissza, pioneer and founder of the CSIRO Dung Beetle Project. It was a great privilege to hear first-hand how the project evolved from an idea based on careful observations, to a project of national and international significance. The information gathered during the visit will form part of the Dung Beetle Resource Package.

We extend our sincere thanks to George and Jocelyn for their time and hospitality. Dr. George recorded a video-message to the people of Lucyvale which will be played at our next community event on Friday 13th June.

UPCOMING EVENT: BISON BEETLE FIELD WALK, CASSEROLE DINNER, BEETLE FILMS & GUEST SPEAKER.

An open invitation is extended to attend a *bison* beetle field walk. In May 2007 we released over 20,000 bison beetles in the valley. It will be interesting to see what activity (if any!) is visible.

The walk will be followed by a casserole dinner, viewing of beetle films and a presentation by Dr. Graeme Stevenson. Graeme has been involved with dung beetle harvesting and release in Tasmania for over 30 years. Working in close conjunction with dairy farmers Doug and Dawn Kershaw (now retired), Graeme has been involved in the redistribution of more than 1,000,000 beetles throughout Tasmania. The Kershaw's generosity of spirit and enthusiasm for dung beetles made this a dynamic partnership that resulted in remarkable achievements on a shoestring budget. Graeme, also known as "Dr.

Splutter Grunt" has taken the positive message about dung beetles and caring for the soil to Primary school students across Tasmania. His passion for all things "soil" is contagious and we are very pleased to have him visit Lucyvale as our guest speaker.

When: Friday 13th June

Where: Lucyvale Hall.

Schedule:

2.30pm	Meet at Hall for cuppa
3.00pm – 5.00pm	Bison field walk
6.00pm – 7.00pm	Casserole tea
7.00pm – 7.30pm	Beetle films
7.30pm	Graeme Stevenson

Please bring a casserole and sweet to share.



Graeme Stevenson will be the guest speaker at our next event on Friday 13th June.

Photo: Courtesy of G. Stevenson

WHEN WILL IT RAIN?

Although it's a bit late – John's predictions for April:

1 st April	Rain
23 rd & 24 th .	Rain
30 th & 1 st May	Rain

Rainfall for April: Above Average.

John's forecast for May:

6 th & 7 th	Showers tending to rain in higher areas
20 th & 21 st	Rain
28 th & 29 th	Showers tending to rain in higher areas

Rainfall for May: Above Average.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING



Friday 9th May
7.30pm at Boucher's.