

# "Do it with Dung"

## FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE MURRAY

### NEWSLETTER

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#### Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of the "Do it with Dung" newsletter. The aim is to keep you informed of project activities and opportunities, provide tips and support to monitors and to give you feedback on monitoring results.

#### Identification & Monitoring Workshops

The workshops are continuing to be rolled out across the region. Workshops have been held in Corowa, Springhurst, Mudgegonga, Cudgewa, Tallangatta Valley, Wooragee, Talgarno and Tawonga. To date we have established over 50 monitoring sites and we are well on our way to reaching our target.

Upcoming workshops include:

- **Glenrowan Rec Reserve: 7.30pm Mon 2<sup>nd</sup> Mar**
- **Moyhu Hall: 7.30pm Tue 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar**
- **Benambra Hall: 10.00am Wed 4<sup>th</sup> Mar**
- **Kergunyah Hall: 7.30pm Thur 5<sup>th</sup> Mar**
- **Murmungee/Bowmans Forest: Tue 10<sup>th</sup> Mar**

Workshops can also be held in Mitta, Bright, Indigo Valley and Oxley if there is sufficient interest.

#### Dung Beetles & Fires

The recent fires have caused substantial distress and losses to communities and farms in our area. Our thoughts go out to all of those who have been impacted. Several monitors have asked what affects the fires would have on their dung beetles. There appears to be very little research conducted in this area.

Given the large number of summer-active beetles in most parts of North East Victoria, it would be expected that these would return in good numbers once the food supply (cattle) has returned.

The fate of larvae buried in brood balls underground is largely unknown. The summer beetles bury their brood balls to a depth of 10 – 20cm deep, whilst the winter beetle *Bubas bison*, tunnel system extends much deeper into the soil (30-60cm). It would be expected that the deeper the brood ball is buried, the more protected it will be. Dung beetles and beetles in general are known for their "toughness". Fingers crossed that this trait also extends to their ability to withstand fires.

#### Efarmer training opportunity

Monitors are invited to participate in Efarmer training. Efarmer is a web-based mapping program which will enable you to directly upload and export your dung beetle monitoring results. It is also a great farm planning tool which will give you access to numerous data layers including: aerial photography, geographic coordinates, property boundaries, public land areas and environmental data.

You can easily map and record works on farm, for example:

- Soil test results
- Rainfall measurements
- Fencing and water systems



Efarmer is easy to use. All you need is a computer and reasonably fast internet connection. If you can use a mouse, you can use e-farmer!

There is no software to purchase and access to the site is free. Efarmer is accessed through a secure login and password.

Training will be offered during the day at a venue with computers. It is expected to run from 10.00am to 3.00pm. If there is sufficient interest, an evening session could be held in Wodonga over two nights.

Sessions could be run in Yackandandah, Beechworth, Tallangatta, Corowa, Wangaratta, Dederang, Corryong or other locations depending on the level of interest and the availability of a suitable training venue.

**Interested? Please let Belinda know:**

**Phone: 02 6027 5294**

**e-mail: [abanas@bigpond.com](mailto:abanas@bigpond.com)**

We need five to six people to run a session.

The e-farmer component of this project is provided courtesy of the North East Catchment Management Authority.



## Upcoming monitoring weeks



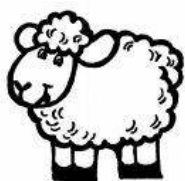
Weeks commencing:

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March**

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March**

Choose **one** day during the monitoring week to set your trap. Remember to use fresh dung and to set your trap in an open location. Use your identification chart and the dung beetle dictionary to assist with identifications.

It is also requested that you keep **one** specimen of each species from each monitoring session. These will be used to confirm identifications. Instructions on how to keep a sample specimen are included in your monitoring kit.

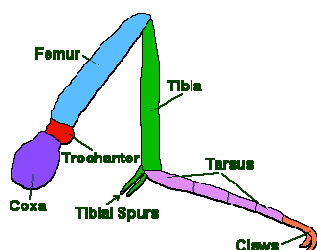


Monitors are also encouraged to look at what is happening in their paddocks. This is particularly important for those properties with sheep. Is the fresh dung being buried? Is there any other evidence of dung beetle activity? Your observations are important, and will supplement trapping results and help build our knowledge of the beetle's capacity to process sheep dung.

## Dung Beetles – Working hard for you

One way to check whether your beetle is a tunnelling beetle is to check the front legs. Digging insects have specialised front legs which are known as "fossorial". Their legs tend to be more robust with well-defined serrated edges and spines.

The Insect Leg



Generalised diagram of an insect leg.

The photo below is of two female *Bubas bison* beetles (winter-active). The beetle on the right is



newly emerged and the spines are quite clear on the front legs. The beetle on the left was found in Lucyvale in November. This was very late in the season to find a winter-active beetle. Inspection of her front legs reveals that she has worked so hard that she has literally worn her digging legs down!

## Summary of monitoring results

We have already had some monitoring results come in from areas that have attended workshops in February. Below is a sample of results

Site	Dung type	Location	Number & Species	
2	cattle	Corowa	1 7	<i>alexis</i> <i>fulvus</i>
3	cattle	Corowa	0	-
4	cattle	Rennie	3	<i>aygulus</i>
6	cattle	Savernake	0	-
7	sheep	Corowa	0	-
8	sheep	Corowa	2	<i>fulvus</i>
11	?	Corowa	4 9	<i>alexis</i> <i>aygulus</i>
14	cattle	Byawatha	14 10 10 4 2 4	<i>alexis</i> <i>aygulus</i> <i>binodis</i> <i>fulvus</i> <i>pallipes</i> <i>taurus</i>
15	horse	Springhurst	1 1 1	<i>aygulus</i> <i>australis</i> <i>fulvus</i>
21	cattle	Springhurst	1 3 6 1	<i>alexis</i> <i>australis</i> <i>fulvus</i> <i>taurus</i>
22	cattle	Rosewhite	65 95	<i>fulvus</i> <i>taurus</i>
28	cattle	Yackandandah		<i>alexis</i> <i>binodis</i> <i>fulvus</i> <i>pallipes</i> <i>taurus</i>
44	cattle	Mitta Mitta	1 250 250	<i>alexis</i> <i>fulvus</i> <i>taurus</i>

As previously mentioned, we request that you keep one specimen of each species each time you set your traps. This will enable verification of your monitoring results.

These initial results already indicate that there is considerable diversity in the numbers and species caught across the region. It is possible that traps set with sheep dung may not be as effective in trapping beetles. The key is to keep persisting and to maintain a close eye on what is happening in the paddocks.

I look forward to receiving your monitoring results and observations from across the region.

**The "Do it with Dung – from the Mountains to the Murray" Project is funded by "Caring for our Country" and managed by Kiewa Catchment Landcare Group.**



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