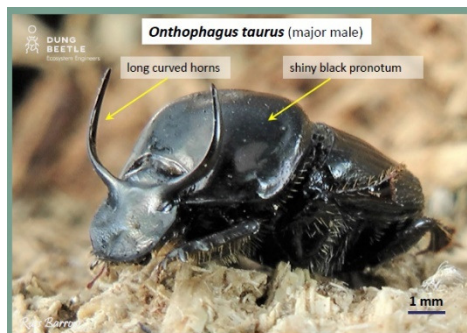
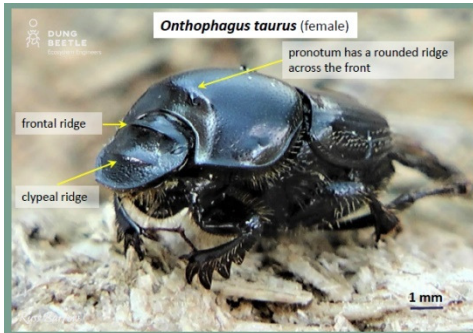


Onthophagus taurus (introduced)



Size: 8–10 mm

Colour: Shiny black

Horns: Major males have long, curved horns; females have none

Minor males: Very short horns extending upwards from back of head

Flight time: Day

Active seasons: Spring to autumn

Distribution in Australia: Victoria, WA, SA, Tas, NSW



NRM regions where *Onthophagus taurus* is known to be present (Source: DBEE).

South West Prime Lamb Group (SWPLG) demonstrations: *O. taurus* has been the most commonly found introduced dung beetle in SWPLG traps, occurring in large numbers at all host properties. Throughout summer, some sites caught enough beetles overnight to fill a 2.5L container! They're a small beetle, but in large numbers they're capable of shredding a dung pat within a day, making them valuable for cleaning pastures and controlling bush flies, particularly over summer/ autumn. *O. taurus* will bury (rather than shred) at other times of the season.

Lifecycle: Development from egg to adult takes 8-10 weeks depending on soil temperature and there are at least two generations a year. The adults build nesting areas with several brood balls, approximately 10-15 cm below the dung pat. Each brood ball has one egg.

Interesting facts: *O. taurus* can pull 1140 times its own body weight - the equivalent of a 70-kilogram person being able to lift 80 tonnes, the weight of six double-decker buses.¹

Minor males apparently compensate for their much smaller horns by having huge testicles, increasing their chances of fertilising a female.¹

Dung burial: *O. taurus* buries dung to around 10-15 cm. These beetles are not too discerning about the species providing a dung source- you may find even them shredding dog dung.

Preferences and establishment: The number of beetles present on a farm is largely dependent on the amount of dung available. Beetles can be introduced as starter colonies or from farms with an ample population. A list of dung beetle suppliers can be found on the DBEE link below, many of which can provide *O. taurus*.

Acknowledgments & references:

Photos by Russ Barrow- Dung Beetle Ecosystems Engineers project dungbeetles.com.au

¹ Dung beetle claims strongest insect title: ABC Science <https://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2010/03/25/2855697.htm>

Dung beetle suppliers: <https://www.dungbeetles.com.au/livestock-producers/buying-dung-beetles>