**Meet the dung beetles on South West Prime Lamb Group (SWPLG) farms**

Dung beetles have been the focus of on-farm demonstrations underway with the South West Prime Lamb Group (SWPLG). Despite a wealth of cattle-related research into dung beetles, there is limited research on dung beetles in sheep production systems. The group established an Enhanced Producer Demonstration Site (EPDS), co-funded by Agriculture Victoria and Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and sought support through the [Dung Beetle Ecosystem Engineers](https://www.dungbeetles.com.au/) (DBEE) project.

One of the group’s aims has been to identify what beetles are active on sheep dung in the south west, when they are abundant and importantly when there are seasonal gaps that could be filled by introducing more beetles. To achieve this, eight producers have taken part in monthly dung beetle trapping using sheep dung baits: four in 2019-2020 and four in 2020-2021.

Eleven species of dung beetles have been found, including eight introduced and three native species.

Information sheets have been developed for each beetle using identification photos by Russ Barrow ([DBEE](https://www.dungbeetles.com.au/)). To view these, click on the links below.

* [*Aphodius fimetarius*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/aphodius-fimetarius) - Introduced
* [*Bubas bison*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/bubas-bison) - Introduced
* [*Euoniticellus fulvus*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/euoniticellus-fulvus) - Introduced
* [*Euoniticellus pallipe*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/euoniticellus-pallipes)*s* - Introduced
* [*Geotrupes spiniger*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/geotrupes-spiniger) - Introduced
* [*Onitis aygulus*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/onitis-aygulus) - Introduced
* [*Onthophagus australis*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/onthophagus-australis) - Native
* [*Onthophagus binodis*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/onthophagus-binodis) - Introduced
* [*Onthophagus mniszechi*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/onthophagus-mniszechi) - Native
* [*Onthophagus posticus*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/onthophagus-posticus) – Native
* [*Onthophagus taurus*](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/farming-systems-demonstrations-program/onthophagus-taurus) - Introduced

*Onthophagus taurus* has been the most commonly trapped dung beetle, followed by *Euonticellus fulvus,* both are mostly active during the warmer months. Many of the other species have been found in low numbers and a noticeable gap in abundance has been observed in winter and early spring.

SWPLG have also conducted trials that measured increases in soil fertility to depth from the dung burial activity of *Bubas bison*. The group plan to run a dung beetle field day in autumn 2022 to discuss demonstration results.

More information on these demonstrations can be found at [www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/on-farm-demos](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/on-farm-demos) > Demonstrating the benefits of dung beetles to prime lamb producers.

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