

98/Q02



## Producer Research Support

### Dung Beetles for Gympie

Gympie District Beef Liaison Committee



Beef producers from around Gympie in Queensland identified 11 species of dung beetles on their farms during a Producer Research Support project, but only one of these species was identified in every area surveyed.

#### Key points

- Dung beetle surveys indicated they show potential in assisting reduction in buffalo fly numbers.
- Eleven species of dung beetles were found on properties around Gympie, QLD. Only one species was common to all properties found.
- It was thought a larger survey was needed to identify beetles that might be trapped in surrounding areas and introduced into the Gympie area.

#### The project

Dung beetles quickly disperse cattle dung, reducing the breeding ground of buffalo fly. Through the identification of the species living on their farms, the group realised they were lacking many species present elsewhere in Queensland.

The producer group aimed to introduce new dung beetles into the Gympie area and raise awareness of producers being able to collect, identify and spread beetles with a focus on correct chemical control of parasites.

The group also wanted to increase producer awareness of the benefits of dung beetles, while being able to collect, identify and spread beetles themselves. Beetles were bought from former CSIRO entomologist, John Feehan, Soilcam, ACT

#### Objectives

1. Select, purchase and distribute dung beetles on four properties;
2. Monitor the spread of dung beetles to determine the success and activity levels using trapping and identification at 15 sites on member properties;
3. Conduct a form on dung beetles and buffalo fly control;
4. Prepare a live beetle display for Gympie Farmex (October) Rotary Field Days; and
5. Utilise the expertise of John Feehan, Soilcam, Canberra (who previously worked on the beetle program with CSIRO) for members

#### What was done?

The program began with a dung beetle display at Gympie Farmex (Gympie Agricultural Field Days) in October 1998, which included live beetles as well as a display hired from Soilcam. The display was well attended over the two days.

According to group spokesperson Jim Viner, there was a positive response from producers who wanted to know more about the beetles and their ability to suppress buffalo fly populations. The next event was a field day in January 1999. Guest speaker was John Feehan from Soilcam. The ABC TV program Landline covered the field day.

"John gave us a very informative talk on the beetles, their habits, the role they played in helping control buffalo fly and methods of trapping the beetles. The day was very well attended by about 80 people," said Mr Viner.

"This in itself was a big boost to public awareness of the beetles and the role they play," said Mr Viner.

"Producers invited to the field day were encouraged to bring beetles they had trapped for identification by Mr Feehan.

#### Contact details

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### **MLA also recommends BeefPlan**

BeefPlan is a non-traditional approach to learning. Groups of like-minded beef producers, work together as a management team to focus on property management. Importantly the learning agenda is set and controlled by the group.

Contact Steve Banney - Project Coordinator  
Tel (07) 4093 9284 or [sdb@austarnet.com.au](mailto:sdb@austarnet.com.au)

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### **Dung Beetles for Gympie**

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"This small survey gave us a snapshot of what beetles are active in the Gympie region."

Mr Viner said interest in the project waned over the winter months when the beetles went into their dormant phase.

"We were hoping to use pit fall traps to trap beetles through the winter and following spring to monitor the active species for a more accurate survey. We felt that people may not have caught the beetles in the appropriate way."

Mr Viner said the group learned they were not trapping the beetles correctly and, therefore, not getting an accurate survey result. They also realised a much larger survey was needed to identify beetles that could be trapped in surrounding areas and introduced into the Gympie area, rather than buying in beetles.

While the group did not achieve all it set out to achieve, Mr Viner said the project did raise awareness of the beetles and the role they play.

"Producers now seem more aware of them."