



# THE NORTHERN TABLELANDS DUNG BEETLE EXPRESS

## NEWSLETTER

## SUMMER 2004

### NOT THE NINE O'CLOCK NEWS

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Now seems like a good time to update you all on exactly what the project has achieved over the past few years.

With the valuable contribution made by Site Monitors and Landholders the project has recovered eleven introduced species and nine identified native species. The project has also been able to gain an insight into the activity periods of both native and introduced beetles and this will enable us to introduce suitable species to fill the gaps in activity which currently exist.

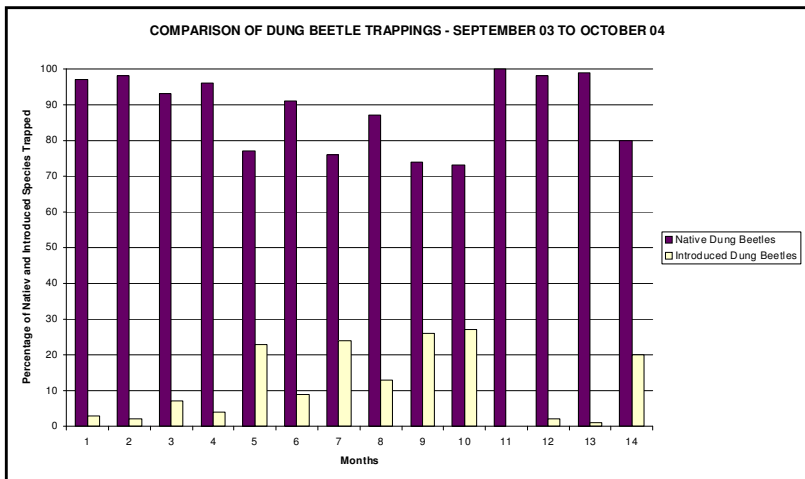
Information already gained has led to several successful harvests and a number of redistributions.

We have released 51,000 dung beetles throughout the project area and have facilitated the release of an additional 12,000 beetles in surrounding areas. These beetles comprise 9 different species, 4 of which had not previously been recovered in the project area and 5 which were not considered to have reached their geographical or climatic distribution potential.

A number of harvests are planned for the coming months and we hope to be able to harvest the winter active *Onitis caffer* in late autumn.

Below is a graph comparing the percentage of native and introduced species trapped over a 12 month period from September, 2003 to October, 2004. Native dung beetles represent the majority of beetles trapped and both native and introduced species show a drop in activity levels during cooler periods. Clearly there is a need to increase the abundance of introduced species and establish colonies of beetles which tolerate a wider range of seasonal conditions.

This graph was compiled using all the sites in the project area from The Summit to Walcha, however, individual site graphs have all shown very similar results.

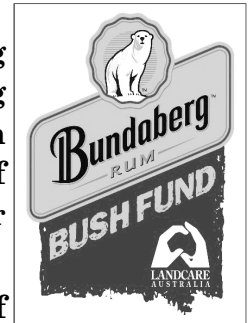


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## IT'S ANOTHER TEQUILA SUNRISE

Actually, it's another Bundy sunrise - Bundaberg Rum has become a sponsor of the Dung Beetle Express Project through their Bush Fund program. We are, of course, thrilled by this though it is going to be difficult to make our "in kind" contribution - drinking lots of the stuff! However, we are no strangers to adversity and will certainly rise to the challenge!

The money from the Bush Fund will be used to increase dung burial on properties within the Malpas Catchment thus reducing nutrient loads in the water supply utilised by town residents in Guyra and Armidale. The catchment area covers 200 <sup>2</sup>km of agricultural land with livestock grazing constituting the major land use.



It is said that when you eat the mescaline worm found in bottles of tequila you see the world through the eyes of the worm. Wonder if Bundaberg Rum would be interested in putting a beetle in every bottle .....

## EXCUSES FOR NOT SENDING IN YOUR BEETLES

Over the past years we've heard them all! Everything from "the mice ate my homework" to "they were in the box went I sent it". However, in the interest of fair play (and saving ourselves from hearing the reasons) here's a nice little excuse you might like to think about.

"I'm sorry I have developed Entomophobia and can't bear the thought of a dung beetle anymore". This condition exists and is something that should be taken a bit seriously - though if you are reading this newsletter it is unlikely that you have it.

Apparently most entomophobics have "specific insect revulsion". This means that while they might cope very well with a flea they could suffer severe symptoms of panic and general anxiety if confronted by a cockroach.

The reasons for this may be personal experience, ie a bee stung them, but current theory suggests that entomophobia is inherited or created by fear instilled by other methods.

Firstly, let's blame the parents. A small child picks up an insect and the parent's response is "Put that down, it'll bite you" and then proceeds to squash the poor creature. Now you have a phobic child.

Secondly, the media. Take horror movies such as The Killer Bees or The Fly and what's a normal child to do? They are scarred (and scared) for life.

Thirdly, myths. The darkling beetle was a symbol of death and the praying mantis was sent by the God Hecatus to devour young people.

So, next time you have the opportunity why not take the time to show young people what insects are and how beneficial they can be? Future generations will thank you (not the therapists perhaps, but you can't please everyone).

## YOU HAVE NO NEW MESSAGES

**This is not just another whine about the state of anyone's social life (though now you ask .....). No, this is important stuff and must be taken seriously, immediately.**

**As mentioned in the previous newsletter we were overwhelmed by responses from people wanting more information on dung beetles and requesting identification of the ones on their properties.**

**Time and travel costs don't normally permit us to visit individual properties so we asked people to send in their beetles for identification or, alternatively, hold a field day encouraging other landholders to bring their beetles along too.**



**So, where are you all? The Project Officer gets very surly when confined to the desk doing paperwork and, in turn, everyone suffers. Your beetles should be well and truly active by now so grab a pad and get going. Send those beetles in now!**

**Get on to your Landcare Representative and get that day organised now! Contact the Project Officer now!**

## FORGET LOW CARB, LOW FAT - GO PROTEIN

**This story has nothing to do with dung beetles but in the interest of all those trying to get slim for the summer I thought it might prove inspirational. This diet encapsulates the "triple bottom line" principal. It is environmentally friendly, economically sound and socially beneficial. This is not just a diet - it can change your life. This is the Plague Locust Diet!**

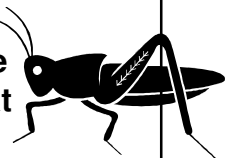
**Now before you get all worked up about how boring it would be to eat nothing but locusts, this diet comes with several handy recipes that are guaranteed to make you the queen (or king) of any social gathering.**

**All this and not an ounce of fat to be found! This is a truly miraculous weight loss diet - the persons responsible guarantee that you will never over eat and you will never have to pay for expensive prepackaged food. Exercise is also incorporated making this an all inclusive fitness program.**

**First, catch your locusts. Take several dozen plump females and make a slit in the abdomen of each one, stuff with a peanut. Then lightly cook in a wok or hot frying pan adding a little oil or salt to taste. Very similar to popcorn.**

**You can also make nutritious week day snacks using Sunday's leftover roast locust. Grind the locust to a fine powder and eat with a spoon (in a similar fashion as you would sherbert). The legs are, apparently, particularly relished for their pleasant taste.**

**The only limit to the culinary delights you can create and eat while practising the locust diet is your imagination and your catching skills. However, if you start today, while locusts are plentiful, your fitness levels and capture expertise will ensure that you can maintain the locust diet all year around and that's got to be a great thing. (adapted from "Offbeat", Sunday Telegraph 14/11/04)**



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**UP AND COMING EVENTS**

**21st January - "Oakhurst" Deepwater -  
Date and time to be confirmed (Contact  
the Project Officer)**

Days are also planned for Tenterfield,  
Stanthorpe and Glen Innes.

These days will be held in the New Year  
- Please contact the Project Officer for  
details.

**THE SOLUTION TO PASTURE  
POLLUTION**

**FLY, FLY, GO AWAY**

With the buffalo fly season upon us it is timely to mention methods of controlling these pests. The current "fly worry" figure is 100 flies per beast before treating. Bulls and dark cattle are likely to be affected first. Can you treat these and leave the rest of the herd for a while, leading to staggered treatment times? At an average cost of between 55 and 80 cents per beast, excluding time and labour, this may prove economical. Is it possible to use ear tags, back rubbers, dust bags or oversprays as these result in less chemical being excreted in the dung?

What about all the new products on the market this year? They usually aren't really "new" just new combinations of chemicals or new names for existing combinations. Look at the active ingredients and refer to your Agforce parasiticide brochure. You can then judge what the impact on your dung beetles is likely to be. Names may change - it's the active constituents that count.

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