

DUNG BEETLES



The question has been asked, do dung beetles work in alpaca dung? Well, here at Lumeah, home of Wallaby Ridge and Ausfinesuri we have been trying to answer that very question by doing fortnightly monitoring of dung beetle activity since January 2009 and will continue future monitoring.

by IAN PROCTOR

SINCE ABOUT FEBRUARY 2006, ABOUT 40,000 dung beetles have been released on the property. The majority were released in the winter and summer of 2009. They need time to establish but hopefully this summer we will see a sizeable difference in the number and species of dung beetle active in our alpaca dung. The dung beetle species that were already working on the property were *O. Binodis*, *E Fulvis*, *E Africans*, *O Alexis* and *O Pecurius* (imports) and the native dung beetles *O Australis* and *O Leai*.

Eleven other species have been released on the property or into enclosures to check their suitability to these areas and climate. The enclosures are also being used in an attempt to increase the numbers of some species of these rarer beetles before release. The species are *Bubus bison*, *Copris hispanus*, *Euoniticellus intermedius*, *Geotrupes spiniger*, *Onitis aygulus*, *Onitis caffer*, *Onthophagus gazelle*, *Onthophagus nigriventris*, *Onthophagus Taurus*, *Sisyphus rubrus* and *Sisyphus spinipes*.

Three other natives have also been released – *Onthophagus pentacanthus*, *Onthophagus consentaneus* and *Onthophagus granulatus*.



Lumeah, January 2010.



Lumeah – November 2010 :Winter active beetles – alpaca dung – Tasmania, July 2010.



Breeding tent.



Dung beetles breeding inside tent.



Dung beetles – ballrollers inside tent.

Only four of the 23 introduced dung beetles are winter active, all four have been released at Lumeah. They are *Bubus bison*, *Cupris hispanus*, *Onitis caffer* and *Geotrupes spiniger*.

Monitoring at Lumeah

The dung is taken below ground, soil is moved up to the surface – carbon neutralising promotes healthy pastures.

Monitoring the beetle activity has proved that dung beetles do work in alpaca dung – now we need to know which species works the best in our climatic microenvironment.

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