

MITTA VALLEY LANDCARE Inc.
September 2021 Update



Well, here we are in lockdown again and all very disappointed we have had to cancel several functions, our Dung Beetle Get Together, our AGM and the Carbon Workshop by M2M Inc.

Considering restrictions, we have postponed our guest speaker Arthur Scholz (talking bio-controls) to another meeting when we will get all interested into the room. So, the meeting on the 15th September will be **online** and the link for this will be emailed to members in due course.

Anita is still pushing on with organizing Chemical Uses, ACUP and 1080 Baiting Accreditation training, trying to guess what the restriction will be in a week is making her slightly crazy along with the rest of us. We have to scale it back but more news further down!!!

Research brings hope for an invasive prickly problem



invasive blackberry.

As the weather warms up and we start thinking about getting on top of our weeds, the issue of blackberry infestations is at the forefront of many Berringa locals minds. Invasive European blackberries cost over 103 million per year in lost production and control costs and have a detrimental impact on the environment, outcompeting native vegetation and harbouring pest animals.

Several years ago, Mitta to Murray Landcare Inc. were fortunate to welcome Dr Raelene Kwong, Senior Research Scientist Biological Control on Invasive Species from Agriculture Victoria, as a member of the group. This has allowed the group to hear firsthand of the exciting work Dr Kwong and her research team have been doing in finding a biological control agent for

The project, funded by Meat and Livestock Australia and Agriculture Victoria, will investigate whether a cane-boring sawfly (*Phylloecus faunus*), a natural enemy of blackberries in western Europe, will make a suitable biological control agent against invasive blackberries in Australia. In its native range, the cane-boring sawfly larvae tunnel through blackberry primocanes (first-year canes), leading to cane collapse and dieback, and reducing daughter plant production.

Before the sawfly can be released, it must undergo a rigorous assessment process to show that the risk associated with its release into the Australian environment is very low or negligible. This will be done through a series of experiments known as "host specificity testing", designed to predict the sawfly's host range. During these tests, the sawfly will be exposed to native and economically important plant species that are closely related to the predominant weedy species, *Rubus anglocandicans* to see if it is able to feed and live on desired plant species.

Currently, the sawfly is being reared at the CSIRO European laboratories in France and will be imported into the AgriBio quarantine facilities in Melbourne later this year, where the host specificity testing studies will be conducted. Dr Kwong together with Simon Feillafe (Mitta to Murray Landcare Facilitator) will soon collect a number of blackberry plants from our area to use during the project.

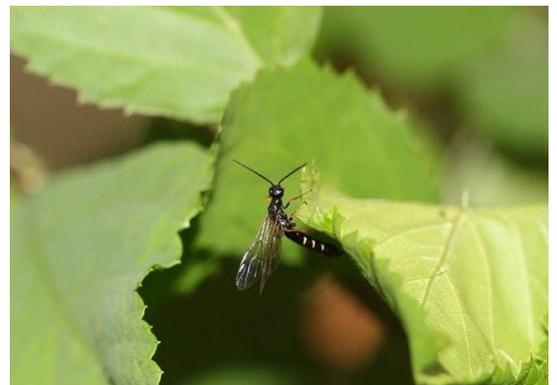
Stay tuned for further updates on how the project progresses.

For further information, contact:

Dr Raelene Kwong, Rae.kwong@agriculture.vic.gov.au

Simon Feillafe, Mitta to Murray Landcare Facilitator - 0438190999

Susanne Watkins, Mitta to Murray Landcare Project Officer - 0423 536 105





“Do it with Dung, from the Mitta 2 Murray.” An establishment and distribution program for 2 spring active dung beetle species across the region.

Mitta Valley Landcare Group was recently successful in gaining funding to run a Dung Beetle project across the Mitta 2 Murray Landcare (Inc.) Network area, which includes 6 local Landcare groups. The funding of approximately \$64K, has come through the National Landcare Program: Smart Farms Small Grants Round 4.

The aim of the project is to establish Spring active Dung Beetles over the next 2 years, with *Onthophagus vacca* and *Bubas Bubalus* beetles.

On the 25th August 2021, we will set up 13 sites of *B. Bubalus* beetles across 13 properties, with at least a further 10 sites of *O. vacca* later on in the season.

Dung beetles are known as structural architects of the soil, increasing storage of carbon and availability of nutrients, increasing dry matter production by up to 30%, and a range of other associated benefits. Though to me the true excitement from a project like this comes from digging up an area where dung beetles have been working and observing. Locally in the last few weeks I have dug ground where a Dung Beetle called *Bubas Bison* have been active, (view photo) look at the holes, with the transfer of soil and dung. In older tunnels the worms and fungal growth will be active. The soil is alive.



Apart from what can be seen, Dung Beetle establishment is a long-term commitment that captures the interest of many landholders. It has production and environmental benefits that will continue well beyond our lifetimes.

If you have any queries about the project, please do hesitate to contact Simon Feillafe - Landcare Facilitator: sfeillafe@outlook.com



*Setting up tents in Spring Creek
“They start ‘em Young!!!!!!”*

*John & Tony Maddock
Bryants Gap have theirs
fed & bedded down*



AgVet Chemical Users Course Accreditation 1080 + PAPP ACUP Endorsement

At the moment the course instructor intends to run the course on the Thursday 16 & Friday 17th **September** (COVID19 permitting). We have enough people that have expressed an interest to run the course and because we are assuming allowable numbers will be small, we are capping to those that have their names down already BUT we will have a waiting list for anyone that would like their names down to replace anyone that pulls out or restrictions allows us to add more people - we will contact those on the list first.

The chemical course is a two day or the refresher can be run for half a day within those days!! Those who already have the chemical users certificate will only need half a day for the 1080 baiting.

The Agricultural Chemical User Permit (ACUP) provides authority to purchase specified 'restricted supply' chemicals and is a prerequisite for 1080 endorsement.

AgVet Chemical Users Course Accreditation (full course) TWO DAYS

Time: 8.00am-2.00pm Thursday 16th and 9:00-4:00 Friday 17th September. (lunch provided)

Cost: \$350 for course and \$70 to obtain ACUP accreditation

A Deposit of \$50 to secure places and we are offering a discount on these prices to LANDCARE members from grant funds.

1080 + PAPP ACUP Endorsement

1080 + PAPP is used to control a variety of vertebrate pests in Victoria, such as rabbits, foxes, wild dogs and feral pigs.

Time: half day TBA week following Chemical Course

Cost: \$200

Unsure if you have qualifications or not?

If you are unsure if you have an Agricultural Chemical User Permit, or may have lost it or misplaced it, you can check by calling: 1800 678779. Or renewals on www.agriculture.vic.gov.au

IMPORTANT to get your name down or for more information contact anitafreynolds@gmail.com 0419 238 452