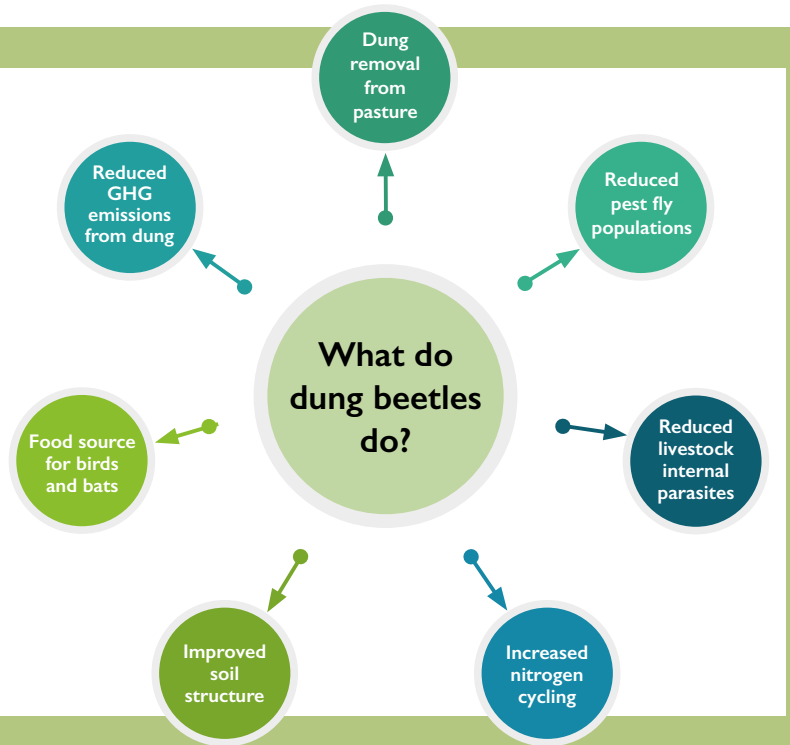


The role of dung beetles on livestock farms

Dung beetles are small beetles that live in dung and below ground. We rarely give them much thought, because we cannot see them without looking for them. But the role they play on farms is huge, with suggested industry benefits worth over £350 million a year.



- Dung beetles remove dung from the pasture and bury it underground
- They create channels that improve soil structure and drainage
- They facilitate nutrient cycling
- They reduce GHG emissions and aid carbon sequestration by processing the dung
- They reduce the survival of pest fly larvae and gastrointestinal parasite larvae in dung pats
- They increase soil fauna activity by taking dung below ground. This improves the overall health and diversity of the soil
- They provide food for bats, birds and some mammals, such as hedgehogs and foxes

What can farmers do to help dung beetle populations?

- Keep some stock outdoors all year round to provide continuous habitat.
- Livestock diets high in roughage produce dung of a more favourable consistency for dung beetles, as well as promoting health in livestock.
- Use faecal egg counting to determine when livestock need treating for internal parasites. Worming products can be detrimental to beetles and reducing their use will help beetle populations.
- Use accurate weight dosage of antimicrobials/antiparasitics to reduce environmental release. This can be achieved using smart weight scales and dosage guns.
- Reduce soil disturbance where beetles are present to preserve their habitats.

Dung beetles in a dung pat

A dung pat showing holes and tunnels where dung beetles have been active



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