

Beneficial Insects



UConn Photo / Sean Flynn

Dung Beetle

Dung beetles live everywhere in the world except for the very cold regions of the Arctic and Antarctica. They have dark, round bodies, six legs, and wings folded under hard, protective covers. Some male dung beetles have small horns on their heads. Dung beetles are good citizens and clean up what animals leave behind. That's right – they eat dung or poop!

There are three main groups of dung beetles - rollers, tunnellers, and dwellers. They are named for the way they use the poop they find. Rollers shape poop into balls and roll them away from the pile. They then bury the ball to either munch on later or to use as a place to lay their eggs. Tunnellers crawl into the poop and dig a tunnel beneath it. Dwellers live inside the poop.

Why would an insect want to eat poop? When an animal (such as a cow) eats tasty hay or grain, parts of the hay or grain pass through without being digested and end up in the animal's poop. It's these nutritious bits of undigested food that dung beetles like to eat and in the process, they clean the environment.