



Poronia erici — dung buttons

Richard Robinson, Science Division, Manjimup, richard.robinson@dec.wa.gov.au



© Richard Robinson

Poronia erici is a common fungus found throughout southern Australia. In Western Australia it can be found in all habitats that support the western grey kangaroo. Its common name is dung buttons, and it fruits only on the scats of herbivorous mammals.

The fruit bodies have a tough texture and are generally 2–5 mm in diameter, but they can be as large as 10mm. They have a dark brown bowl- or cup-shaped base and a flat, beige top that is punctured by tiny irregular sized pores. Spores are produced in small flask-shaped receptacles embedded in the fruit and are released through the pores, which form the opening of the receptacle. This type of fruit body is called a stroma (*strom-*: bed or mattress).

Dung buttons can be very common, especially on open recently burnt sites with lush new plant growth that attracts a lot of kangaroos. Sometimes up to 25 buttons can be found on a single scat. In the southwest and other regions of southern Australia, dung buttons can also be found fruiting on wallaby, kangaroo, wombat, rabbit, sheep, goats and sometimes cow and horse dung.

The scientific name describes the appearance of the fungus and its common habitat. *Por-*: pores, *-onia*: pertaining to or related to, *eric-*: heath (likely referring to open heathlands where it is commonly found).