Media Summary

Burying beetles use carcasses for breeding. To better understand how carcass attributes affect beetles’ reproduction, we conducted breeding experiments using a wide size range of lab and wild carcasses from different taxa (mammal, bird, and reptile). Breeding outcomes, such as the number of eggs and larvae as well as total larval mass, all showed a hump-shaped relationship with carcass size. Moreover, breeding outcomes and larval growth were similar between lab and wild carcasses and among carcass taxa. Overall, our study suggests that medium-sized carcasses, regardless of carcass source or taxon, are optimal for the breeding performance of burying beetles.