

FLIES

August 2020



There are five main types of fly which are commonly found bothering cattle, but around 20 of which have the potential to live on cows in the UK. As is the case with most things, prevention is better than cure and so we hope that most of you have already given your animals some kind of protection from these unwanted guests. But with the warm, wet weather, we have been seeing lots of animals with a real fly cloud and subsequent New Forest Eye/summer mastitis/maggot damage. We thought a quick summary of our enemy and control options would be a good reminder for anyone who has it on their 'to do' list. We know how much of a hassle getting animals in to treat at this time of year can be, but you may save yourself time and money by preventing flies using your animals as their home. And, of course, our responsibility for the welfare of the animals in our care is paramount.

The most common fly to be found on cattle in the UK is the face fly *Musca autumnalis*.

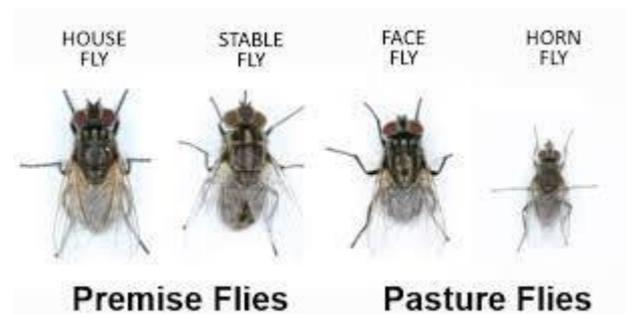
- ◆ Adult female lays eggs on fresh cattle manure
- ◆ Eggs hatch into larvae
- ◆ Larvae develop in the manure
- ◆ Larvae pupate in soil near manure pat
- ◆ Adults emerge from pupae (white)
- ◆ Life cycle from egg to adult is from 11 - 17 days
- ◆ Overwinter as adults

Face Fly Life Cycle

As you can see, every stage of the face fly's lifecycle is dependent on its cow friends. Other flies have similar but not identical cycles, often involving at least one (often more) stages which

need cows in order to progress to the next. Understanding the direct link between the species helps to explain why flies are such a problem for our cattle, as they will actively seek out their hosts over other mammals.

The face fly is not a biting fly, generally feeding from secretions on the face from the eyes, nose and mouth. This is why they play such an important role in the transmission of New Forest Eye. However, they are opportunistic and will feed from wounds and blood if the bite is made by other flies.



Four of the most common type of fly found on cattle, and their preferred location.

As previously mentioned, New Forest Eye and summer mastitis are two diseases to be vigilant for among cattle badly affected by flies. Please also be aware of open wounds which are easy breeding grounds for the maggots of many fly species.

The production loss in cattle worried by flies has been well documented. Constantly having to move to avoid a swarm means cattle badly affected by flies never settle into rumination as they should, which can affect growth and production rates over the whole season. Temperaments (of cattle and fly stressed humans!) can also alter, making working with cows more stressful. Multiple bite wounds will

eventually weaken the host – especially smaller, younger calves. For example, female horn flies feed up to 40 times a day by sucking their hosts blood – every time in a new place. Multiply that by 300 or so in a swarm and you quickly have an animal potentially being bitten over 12,000 times in a day - that is from just one species!

Conversely, the stable fly will only feed 2 or 3 times in a day. However, they have a much more aggressive and painful 'slashing' bite, which cows hugely object to. They tend to favour the legs and ventrum of cattle and so any stamping and tail swishing will often indicate the presence of these flies. Because of the painful nature of the bite and the reaction of the cow, the fly often has to revisit the site multiple times or bite again. This results in each animal being bitten many times by a single fly over the course of the day to satisfy those 2 or 3 feeds.

With all that in mind, we have several fly control options:

1. **Spot on – SPOTINOR** – it lasts 4-8 weeks 1/2.5L or **DECTOSPOT** lasts 4-8 weeks – both kill adult flies.
2. **Fly tags – FLECTRON** – last up to 4 months, can apply one in each ear if fly burden is heavy. The tag is impregnated with cypermethrin which kills flies within minutes.
3. **Pour on – FLYPOR** – lasts 8 weeks. Kills adult flies.
4. **Surface spray – NEPOREX** – kills larvae. Spray around affected housing and dung heaps. Only applied to nesting sites as it has no effect on adult flies but breaks the lifecycle before the adult emerges. For heavy burdens it may require a second application 2-3 weeks later. Otherwise, monitor maggot development as an indicator for the next required dose.
5. **Insect strips/liquid fly bait** – to reduce the number of adult flies indoors and used in addition to other measures.

It is important to remember that the multiplication of the fly population occurs quickly once the temperature reaches the threshold for fly emergence (different in each species.) Each female can produce up to 600 eggs, so by treating cattle early and decreasing that initial population, the subsequent explosion can be dramatically reduced. It also makes more economical sense to use a product such as Flectron early in the season, as it will cover the 4 warmest months of the year rather than less fly prone, cooler times.

Having said that, please remember that it is really important to treat animals showing signs of being bothered by flies, whatever the time of year.



Please give us a call if you want to discuss fly control options further – the dispensary stocks or can order all products covered in this newsletter for arrival the next day. Bridget will be happy to discuss competitive pricing with you all! We are also here to talk through any worries regarding New Forest Eye or summer mastitis if required.

Hoping you are all enjoying the good weather (despite the flies)!



Lucy



Grace