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Control Stable Flies to Reduce Stress for Cattle

NORTH PLATTE, Neb. — As if recent hot, humid days weren't tough enough, Nebraska cattle are battling stable flies, which can exacerbate heat stress and other problems, a University of Nebraska−Lincoln entomologist said.

Cattle producers should act now to reduce stable flies in feedlots, said Jack Campbell, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources entomologist at UNL's West Central Research and Extension Center at North Platte.

Stable flies worsen heat stress when they feed on the front legs of cattle. This causes cattle to bunch together, which reduces their ability to dissipate heat.

"That's why it's important to use strict sanitation measures such as cleaning up spilled feed, cleaning pens, scraping behind feed structures, filling holes in the pens and, in general, keeping the pens, fence lines and drainage areas dry," Campbell said.

Stable flies are most threatening for Nebraska feedlot and dairy operations, he said. Stable flies breed in wet, decaying organic matter such as manure mixed with dirt and moisture, spilled feeds and drainage from silage piles.

In addition, heat stressed cattle eat less and lose weight. "But more importantly the heat stress may be severe enough to cause death," Campbell said.

Flies also can weaken cattle's immune systems.

"Because of the reduction in energy, cattle aren't as resistant to other diseases," he said. "If they've spent most of their energy fighting flies, they don't have as much immunity."

Until cooler weather sets in, producers can only treat livestock and wait for fly numbers to decline.

Producers should use insecticide sprays to provide relief from stable fly attacks, Campbell said.

"This will provide a quick knockdown of the adult fly population," Campbell said.

Insecticides registered by stable fly control, such as Vapona, naled, permethrin or stirofos, are listed in UNL Extension Circular EC02−1550−B, Nebraska Management Guide for Arthropod Pests of Livestock and Horses, available at local extension offices.

For more information about stable flies and fly control, consult UNL Extension NebGuides G9301152−A, Stable Fly Control on Cattle (**http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/insects/g1152.htm**), available online and G77−355, A Guide for the Control of Flies in Nebraska Feedlots and Dairies (**http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/insects/g355.htm**), available online at. Both are available at local extension offices.

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