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EC63-1595 Entomology : Face Flies

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entomology

FACE FLIES



Face flies (Musca autumnalis) were known in Europe, Asia, and North Africa before they were found in North America (Nova Scotia, 1952 and New York, 1953). The first specimens were found in eastern Nebraska in 1960. In 1961 the flies were found in most areas of the state.

Face flies are a major pest of cattle and horses in the central and eastern states. The female feeds on moist body excretions or blood from wounds caused by blood-sucking flies or other injuries. Feeding females congregate around the eyes, nostrils and mouths of cattle, causing severe irritation. Swelling and excessive formation of tears often results from irritation around the eyes.

Cattle may huddle in pastures, seek shade, and not feed, resulting in decreased milk production in dairy animals and lower gains in beef animals.

The flies generally remain on cattle during the day, but leave when animals enter buildings, shaded areas, and at night. Infestations are generally greater on cattle in pastures than in feedlots.

LIFE CYCLE

Female face flies lay eggs in fresh cattle manure. Here the maggots develop. Each female lays about 25-30 eggs. Full grown maggots are yellow in color. They leave the wet manure to pupate in dry areas. The pupae are whitish in contrast to brown pupae of other manure breeding flies. Development from egg to adult varies depending upon temperature and other factors, but usually a complete generation will develop in about 10 days to 4 weeks.

Adults seek hibernating sites in September and October. They are often found in attics, between walls, and in other protected places. In homes they can become a household nuisance during the winter. They leave in the spring, and can be found on animals from May to October. Usually the most serious populations occur on cattle from July to September.

Adult female face flies look much like houseflies. They may be a little larger, and have slightly broader bands of white between the eyes. Male face flies have an orange colored abdomen, and a very narrow band between the eyes. The feeding and hibernating habits of face flies help distinguish them from the common house fly.

The larvae (maggots) of face flies are yellowish in color and the pupae are white. Larvae of house flies are white and the pupae are brown.

CONTROL

The only controls recommended for dairy cattle are 0.2% DDVP syrup baits, and pyrethrum sprays. Use DDVP syrup baits at the rate of about 1/10 fluid ounce per head per day. Apply it to the forehead with a single six-inch stroke of a one-half inch paint brush, or with a special calibrated hand sprayer. Applications should be made daily for two or three weeks, then repeated as flies reappear. You must continue the treatment since DDVP decomposes rapidly and the syrup that remains will attract more flies.

Apply pyrethrins plus synergist as a spray. Use 0.1% pyrethrins and 1.0% synergist in an oil solution. Spray about one fluid ounce per animal per day as a mist applied to the head and front quarters. Pyrethrin sprays may last only a few hours.

For beef cattle DDT, toxaphene, methoxychlor, Ronnel or Delnav in oil can be applied by backrubbers. Backrubbers in pastures may not be highly effective. Greater control may be obtained by forcing animals to use them by fencing watering tanks, or salt blocks, so that cattle must use them daily. Special types of gate or feed bunk headrubbers that cattle must lift with their heads may provide a higher degree of control. To be effective backrubbers or headrubbers must be maintained in good condition, and charged with insecticide solutions frequently.

To prepare insecticides for use in backrubbers or headrubbers, mix one of the following with fuel, diesel, or furnace oil:

- DDT, 25%.....1 part to 4 parts oil.
- Methoxychlor, 25%.....1 part to 4 parts oil.
- Toxaphene, 60%..... 1 quart to 4 gallons oil.
- Delnav, 30%..... 1 pint in 5 gallons oil.
- Ronnel, 24%.....2 pints in 5 gallons oil.

DDT should not be used in backrubbers for feedlot cattle within 30 days of slaughter. Toxaphene should not be used within 28 days of slaughter, and not within six weeks if cattle have had forage treated with toxaphene.

These materials in backrubbers will also provide control of horn flies, but will not control stable flies.

CAUTION

Insecticides are poisons and can cause unfavorable results if not properly used.

When using any insecticide, read and follow the directions on the label.

For more information consult your local county Extension agent.