

SUMMER FLIES:

FLY CONTROL OPTIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

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It's almost summertime, which means fly season for your herd. Controlling flies can be irritating for producers and cattle. Flies can carry external parasites that are no good for your herd, as well as impact the production of your grazing herd as they are spending time swatting flies off themselves. Here's a helpful article all about fly control management.

"Fly control management is important to minimize the spread of disease and the negative impacts on production. Several methods can be used to aid in fly control, including dust bags, pour-ons, injectables, fly tags, back rubbers, feed ingredients such as insect growth regulators (IGR) and garlic, and insecticide strips placed on mineral feeders or ear tags. Each fly control method has advantages and disadvantages which should be considered when making management decisions.

Three main fly species affect livestock: stable fly, horn fly, and face fly. Horn flies can have detrimental effects on cow and calf production. Horn fly eggs are laid in the manure, will hatch within a week, and have a 10-to-20-day lifespan. Horn flies are typically located on the back, shoulders, and sides and then will move to the belly during the heat of the day. Horn flies are a detriment because they are blood-sucking, which causes extreme discomfort to livestock. The economic threshold for providing fly control when horn flies are present is when levels reach more than 200 flies per animal.

Face flies are located around the eyes, mouth, and muzzle and feed off the secretions. Face flies lay eggs in manure and have a life cycle of approximately 21 days. The main issue with face flies is that they can transmit pinkeye throughout the herd. Face flies are typically found on cattle in shady areas and near waterways. Between 12 and 14 face flies can reduce the grazing time of the cow by up to an hour.

Stable flies are mainly located on the front legs and are most common in feedlots and dairies. Larvae are located in decaying organic matter, such as wet hay, or in winter feeding areas. Cattle will bunch up, stand in water, or stomp their feet to remove the flies, which disrupts grazing. Stable flies are also a blood-sucking species and can reduce production. The economic threshold for treatment is approximately five stable flies per leg.

Dust bags and back rubbers (oilers) are good fly control methods. Sprays and pour-ons are another effective method to control flies, but they must be reapplied every seven to 21 days, depending on the product. Oral products are also an effective method of fly control; however, intake should be consistent to maintain control. Effectiveness is difficult to measure if neighbors are not providing fly control. In addition to the tools listed, fly tags can be an effective method of fly control. It is generally recommended that the active ingredient of the fly tag should be alternated every year to aid in minimizing resistance. Fly tags should be applied as late as possible (June 1 or later) to aid in fly control throughout the summer months. Tags should be applied to cows and weaned calves. Tagging the cow usually provides sufficient fly control for the calf. There are numerous brands and tags on the market; take care to read the label to determine the length of fly control and the active ingredient."

Resources:
Montana State University-
Fly control management
for livestock

