

Livestock & Poultry

Department of Entomology

THE FACE FLY

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The face fly, *Musca autumnalis* (De Geer), which closely resembles the house fly, attacks livestock chiefly on the head, face and neck. Beef and dairy cattle, horses and open-faced sheep are the principal animals bothered by this pest. They feed, without piercing the skin, upon the mucous secretions around the eyes, nose and lips and upon fresh wounds or saliva deposits on the shoulders, neck, brisket and legs.

DISTRIBUTION

During 1950-1951 the face fly was introduced into Nova Scotia from Europe and by 1953 was found in the northeastern U.S.; by 1960 it had spread to 26 states in the northeastern quarter of the U.S. The fly was first reported in Indiana in 1959 and is now a major livestock pest throughout the state.

IMPORTANCE

Face flies are of primary economic importance as an annoyance to cattle, horses, and less frequently to swine. On cattle, a disruption of grazing, poor utilization of feedstuffs with subsequent weight loss or reduced milk production, and diseases can occur when fly populations are not controlled. Face flies have been implicated in the transmission of conjunctivitis (pinkeye), infectious abortion, and eyeworm (*Thelazia* sp.) in cattle.



Cow with face flies

BIOLOGY

Face flies are about 20 percent larger than house flies, being slightly longer and more robust. The adults are active from early spring to late autumn with only females normally being found on cattle and horses. Males frequent and feed on pollen produced by flowering vegetation. At night, both sexes are found resting on inanimate objects.

The face fly overwinters as an adult, hibernating in protected places such as building lofts and attics. Here, they can become a serious domestic pest by crawling on walls, windows and floors during winter warm spells and when they become active just before leaving the hibernation site. The flies mate shortly after becoming active in early spring. During this time flies congregate in sunny spots on high buildings near ventilator opening or cracks and crevices.

Adult face flies will feed on several kinds of large mammals, but do not lay eggs in or develop naturally in the manure of any animals except cattle. Furthermore, female face flies lay their eggs only in freshly deposited cow manure prior to crust formations — particularly that from animals on rangeland or pasture. Face flies do not lay eggs in manure piles around barns and stables or in the disturbed, urine-saturated and trampled droppings usually associated with beef feedlots and drylots.



Face flies

In the manure, eggs hatch in about one day, and the larvae complete their development in 2 1/2 to 4 days. As the larvae mature, they turn from white to yellow and move to the soil adjacent to the cow manure where they enter the pupal stage. In 5 to 7 days, they will emerge as adults. The entire life cycle is completed in about 2 weeks, and numerous generations per year may occur, depending upon climate conditions. In Indiana, adult flies are most active from May through September.

CONTROL

Control of face flies on cattle can be achieved with insecticide-impregnated ear tag devices and the forced use of self-applications devices (i.e. dust bags and backrubbers).

See Purdue Extension Publication E-12, Control of Cattle Pests <<http://extension.entm.purdue.edu/publications/E-12.pdf>> for fly control details on dairy and beef cattle. Purdue Extension Publication E-207, Self-Application Devices for Cattle Insect Control <<http://extension.entm.purdue.edu/publications/E-207.pdf>> provides details in making and using self-application devices for cattle insect control.

Horses require almost daily applications of insecticides as wipe-on smears, sprays or dusts for suitable fly control.

For further information concerning recommended insecticides and restrictions for use, check with your county educator or contact: Extension Entomology, Purdue University, 901 W. State Street, Smith Hall, W. Lafayette, IN 47907-2089, Phone (765) 494-8761.

READ AND FOLLOW ALL LABEL INSTRUCTIONS. THIS INCLUDES DIRECTIONS FOR USE, PRECAUTIONARY STATEMENTS (HAZARDS TO HUMANS, DOMESTIC ANIMALS, AND ENDANGERED SPECIES), ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS, RATES OF APPLICATION, NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS, REENTRY INTERVALS, HARVEST RESTRICTIONS, STORAGE AND DISPOSAL, AND ANY SPECIFIC WARNINGS AND/OR PRECAUTIONS FOR SAFE HANDLING OF THE PESTICIDES.

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