Stable Fly Facts

 Actual size

Physical Characteristics: Stable flies will feed on blood from practically any warmblooded animal, including humans, pets and livestock. During periods of high stable fly activity, humans can be severely annoyed and this insect has been called "the biting house fly." **Individual flies may feed more than once per day. Peaks of feeding activity commonly occur during the early morning and again in the late afternoon. Stable flies prefer feeding on lower parts of the hosts such as the legs.** Both male and female stable flies feed on blood, and the female requires blood meals to produce viable eggs. **Females deposit their eggs in a variety of decaying animal and plant wastes,** but are rarely found in fresh manure. This fly prefers excrement mixed with straw, soil, silage or grain but are also found in wet straw, hay, grass clippings, other post harvest refuse and poorly managed compost piles. Large round hay or straw bales, where contacted by moist soil, may serve as larval development sites. Larval development requires 11 to 21 days, depending on environmental conditions. Mature larvae then crawl to drier areas to pupate. The pupal period varies from six to 26 days depending on temperature. The entire life cycle from egg to adult is generally completed in three to six weeks.

Control of Stable Flies

Applications of residual insecticides to premises are frequently used to control both house and stable flies. Longer residual insecticides provide control for an extended period when sprayed onto sites where the adult flies congregate. Such places as fences, sides of buildings and inside and outside of animal stalls may be potential day or night resting sites for these flies. Observation of a barnyard situation will rapidly tell the favored resting sites for flies. Flies contact the insecticide when they land on the treated surfaces. Residual insecticides are effective because they control flies over an extended period of time and even will kill flies that emerge after treatment.

Knock-down sprays are effective in killing adult flies present only at the time of application. The chemicals used for these applications are short residual insecticides having a quick knock-down and high contact toxicity. Several types of spray or fogging apparatus may be used for these applications. Wind velocities should be low at the time of application and the droplet or particle size should be small to ensure drift through the feedlot or dairy. This method requires less time for application but has the disadvantage that it will only kill flies present at application.

When does performance become affected by stable flies? When there is more than 15 flies on all four legs or the belly of an animal, performance is being affected.