



THE
WOOD
VETERINARY
GROUP

FARM NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2022

Want less flies on your farm this summer? Act Now!

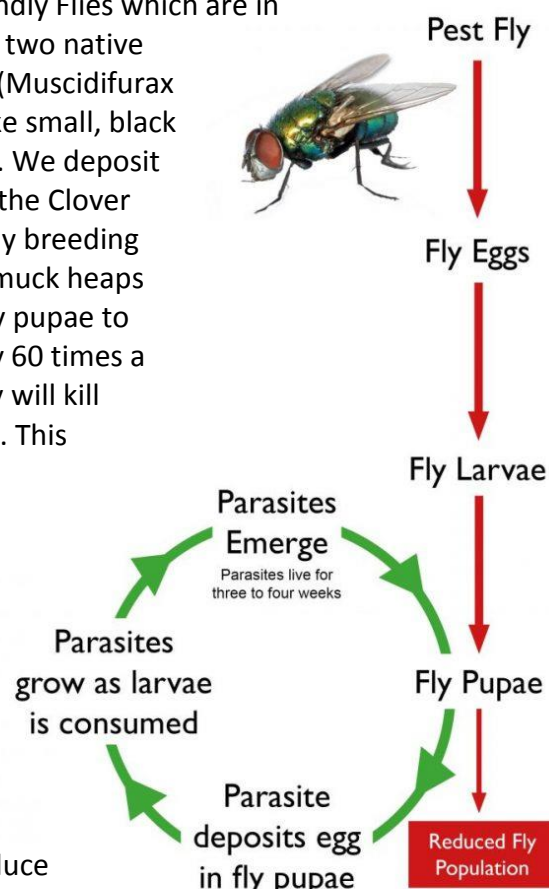
Nuisance and biting flies cause significant stress to livestock and farmers alike in a bad season as well as massive production and welfare issues. Horn flies can each bite up to twenty times a day drawing up to 200ml blood from a cow in just one day where there is a moderate fly population. It is easy to see how this can have a negative impact on feed efficiency and welfare during the summer months. Nuisance flies are also largely responsible for diseases such as Summer Mastitis, New Forest Eye and Fly strike. These diseases are often very frustrating to treat and add significantly to labour and antibiotic use on farm. Another irritating impact can be disruption in heat detection in spring calving herds. Tail paint, Estrus alert stickers and Kamars are all triggered by contact from other cows but if cows are being plagued by nuisance flies and are persistently tail swishing then we will see false heats. This reduces serving accuracy and makes it very difficult to look for returning cows. Fly burdens will also affect yields because of altered lying and grazing behaviour. To make any real impact on nuisance fly populations, it is vital to act BEFORE the warm weather with both environmental and animal management. When using chemical control on animals we need to start preventatively, early in the season ahead of a large hatch of nuisance flies. Unfortunately, chemical control on animals, whilst a very important part of the solution, has a limited impact on overall fly populations and we need to find other solutions to support them.



One of the fantastic tools we have in the effort against nuisance flies are Clover Friendly Flies which are in fact a parasitic wasp. We use two native species of Pteromalid wasps (*Muscidifurax* and *Spalangia*) that look like small, black flying ants (they don't sting!). We deposit fly pupae already incubating the Clover flies around the farm in the fly breeding environment such as sheds, muck heaps

and slurry lagoons. The Clover flies then hatch out and find new fly pupae to lay their eggs in, ingesting the contents and they repeat this nearly 60 times a day. They aren't too fussy about which species of nuisance fly they will kill off but crucially they don't harm bees, pollinators, or other insects. This helps to build your farms own stable population of Friendly Flies tackling nuisance flies all season long. They also hibernate as the weather cools in the autumn along with the nuisance flies, so they are there ready next spring. The use of these native wasp species dramatically reduces the number of nuisance flies hatching in a completely sustainable, natural way that is also compatible for organic standards. As the wasps do not bother cows or people, farms can continue to use hanging fly tapes and cow based repellent products whilst the wasps get established. As part of the Clover Friendly Fly service we will also assess muck management of farm to see if there are any additional ways to reduce fly levels around livestock and sheds. Don't forget our Vet Tech service includes fly repellent application, dehorning and vaccinating any animals ahead of summer turnout as well as Clover fly farm management.

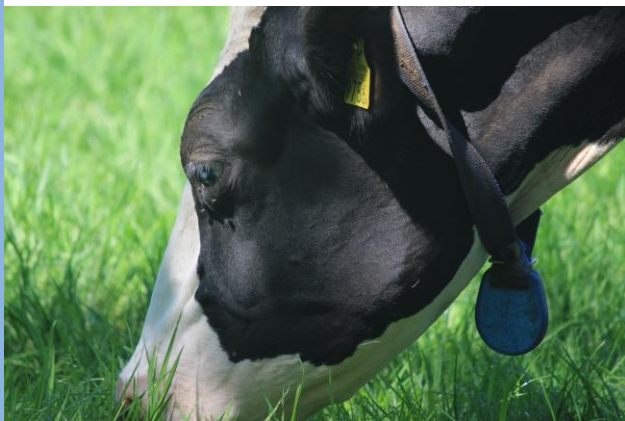
One of our clients is starting their third season of Clover Friendly Flies this week and have seen a huge reduction in the flies around the farm, far less fly related diseases and have already reduced the amount of chemical repellent used on their milking cows.



Spring Grazing – Maximising Milk/Growth From Forage

With a somewhat fluctuating weather pattern over the last month or so with a late winter, a fool's spring and now winter part 2, turnout luckily doesn't seem to have been delayed for the majority of grazing units. However, grass growth is at its most variable with cold overnight temperatures and so we need careful management of our grazing block now to protect it for later in the summer and for maximising silage yields. Now is the perfect time to plan. Here are a few pointers to help make the most of grazing this year:

- **Check boundaries** now to avoid unexpected breakouts and **empty all water troughs** to be cleaned. Stagnant water or heavy algae cover can severely limit water and forage intake
- **Plan rotations** with a daily hectare target and get the whole team involved – a visual farm plan and grazing wedge are ideal ways to explain decisions and quickly see changes that need to be acted on
 - o Keeping heavy or clay pastures for dry weather and well-draining pastures for wet days will reduce pasture damage from poaching, reduce intervention needed and maximise regrowth
- **Measure grass level and growth** using a plate meter weekly – put all this information into your grazing rotation decisions. It allows you to forecast surges in growth and optimise cow nutrition
- Start grazing in the **middle of the forage block** i.e. 24-2600kgDM/hectare:



- o This spreads cows out with less competition avoiding excessive damage when ground is still soft and works especially well for spring calvers with the first section of the calving block
- o Easy to graze down hard to 1500kg and encourages maximum regrowth early in the season
- o Allows fresh calvers easier grazing access when they are building towards peak lactation
- o Saves the high end of the wedge for when the maximum number of cows are calved
- o Leaves the lower end of the wedge to grow on until

later in the spring and be supported if needs be with fertiliser where conditions allow

- **Graze down to 1500kgDM/hectare** but also **observe sward length**. Graze at 8–10 cm leaving a residual of 4–5 cm – sugars are stored in this stubble and support the growth of the next leaf
- **Back fence** cows when paddock grazing – stop cows going back over grazed pasture to ensure 3 leaf grazing is maintained and quality is maximised. Also helps to reduce pasture damage
- Aim for **multiple gateways** – if you can have a set entry and exit this greatly reduces poaching
- **Sample quality** intermittently through the season to get an idea of quality

Cows don't lie and they will reflect the quality of their nutrition in both yield and body condition and for growing stock in their growth rates. Where we closely control and mix rations for the housed part of the year, it is often left somewhat in the hands of the gods for the grazing block and with some simple changes we can also optimise herd production through the spring and summer grazing months.

Navels

In the busy calving and lambing months, we often see navel ill outbreaks. Our top tips for prevention are:

- **Spray** – spray navels rather than using dip cups. Dip cups rapidly become contaminated with faeces and bacteria unless they are cleaned out twice daily. Spray nozzles allow for clean product application. Cover the entire navel avoiding too much product on skin
- **Product** – Strong Iodine 10% (10% ethanol for drying of navel) or Super 7 Plus spray
- **Timing** – As soon after birth. The quicker the navel is dry the less likely bacteria can proliferate
- **Frequency** – repeat in 4-6 hrs at colostrum checks, especially if mum has licked the navel
- **Cleanliness** – calving and lambing pen hygiene directly relates to the amount of navel infections. Clean out/bed up frequently and use lime underneath bedding to reduce bacterial load
- **Time** – the less time in the calving pen the better as is true for crypto, rota and E. coli infections. Move to individual pens where possible or turnout if you can for suckler cows and calves

