



Are Flies a nuisance to you? And your livestock?

Although it is still cold and foggy overnight, we are already seeing the first nuisance fly species appearing out of hibernation. They overwinter in soil or muck emerging when soil temperatures start to rise and so this really is the month to start reducing the impending infestation.

Why are flies a problem?

Nuisance and biting flies cause significant stress to livestock and farmers alike in a bad season as well as production and welfare issues. Horn flies can each bite up to twenty times a day drawing up to 200ml blood from a cow per day where there is a moderate fly population. A female fly can lay 1000 eggs in just 10 days so it's easy to see how their population grows rapidly over the spring and summer.

Nuisance flies are responsible for lots of livestock diseases such as:

- Summer Mastitis
- New Forest Eye
- Fly Strike
- Milk drop from reduced DMI at grazing or in sheds
- Fertility issues – an indirect impact of cows swishing their tails when plagued by nuisance flies are false heats and reduced demonstration. Kamars, tail paint and scratch cards are all triggered by excessive tail swishing resulting in reduced accuracy of service times as well as cows being so stressed by flies that they don't demonstrate when they are bulling. This is an issues already faced by dairy and beef units so we don't need any extra pressure from flies.

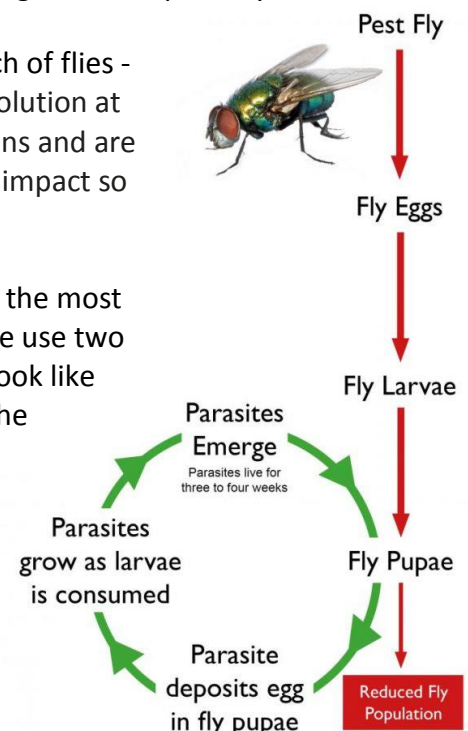


Overall this can be very frustrating and adds significantly to labour and antibiotic use on farm over the season. **So what can we do about flies this year...?**

Reducing the fly population means starting early and using a multi approach strategy:

1. Clover Friendly flies applied to fly breeding areas around the farm every 2 weeks through the season – generally late March to October based on temperature and rainfall
2. Reducing the fly hatching environment close to livestock i.e. moving muck heaps away from sheds to non-grazing fields
3. Chemical control applied early in the season before the mass hatch of flies - chemical control on animals, whilst a very important part of the solution at reducing fly diseases, has a limited impact on overall fly populations and are becoming increasing less effective. Earlier use will maximise their impact so order your fly control product asap

Clover Friendly Flies are a tiny parasitic wasp and have been shown to be the most effective and environmentally friendly alternative to chemical control. We use two native species of Pteromalid wasps (*Muscidifurax* and *Spalagangia*) that look like small, black flying ants (they don't sting!). We deposit fly pupae around the farm that are incubating the Clover flies throughout 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 for 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 with organic standards and regenerative farming practices. 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 on farm to see if there are any additional ways to reduce fly levels around livestock and sheds. Don't forget our Vet Tech service also includes fly repellent application, dehorning and vaccinating any animals ahead of summer turnout as well as Clover fly farm management.

Across the practice we have several farms entering their third and fourth seasons of using Clover Friendly Flies this month having seen a huge benefit year on year not just from less flies and associated disease but a reduction in costly and labour-intensive chemical repellent application. Most have only applied fly repellent to milkers once or twice in a season even in grazing herds

Speak to us this month about how Clover Friendly flies might suit your farm

Navels

In the busy calving and lambing months, we often see navel ill or joint ill outbreaks. When the umbilical cord is wet and fresh, bacteria can easily contaminate the cord resulting in either navel ill or travelling further around the body to any joint mainly the limbs. 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 both sides avoiding too much product on skin**
- Product – Strong Iodine 10% (10% ethanol for drying of navel) or Super 7 Plus spray (safe for Iodine allergies) for drying out the navel. Antibiotic sprays should not be used as they promote resistance and don't dry the navel
- 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 after first spraying
- 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 – group pens are as important as individual pens
- Time – the less time in the calving pen the better as is true for Cryptosporidium, Rotavirus and E. coli infections. Move to individual pens or turnout if you can for suckler cows and calves



New Face

With quite a few arrivals over the next months into the vet team, we are delighted that Pieter is the first of these in early April. He is joining us from the Netherlands where he works with a good mixture of dairies, beef farms and sheep units and is really looking forward to meeting you all in April. He and his girlfriend are excited to explore all that Gloucestershire and the UK has to offer so be sure to point them in the direction of your favourite walk, pub or farm shop.



Wood Vets Farm Team



@woodvetsfarmteam