



# Fly Control in Dairy Cattle and Beef Operations

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Refer to the factsheet 'Integrated Fly Management for Livestock Farms' for additional information on fly management techniques.

## Introduction

Managing fly populations on a dairy or beef farm can be an important concern. High fly populations may cause increased stress to the animals and farm workers and create difficulties with neighbours and surrounding businesses. Therefore it is critical to have a comprehensive approach that uses all available techniques to manage this issue. This factsheet outlines some of these activities that can be used on Dairy and Beef farms.

## Dairy Operations (solid / semi-solid and liquid systems)

### Monitoring

In barns, use bated jug traps and spot cards. Nuisance thresholds are 250 flies per jug trap per week and 50 fly specks per card per week. It is very important, when using jug traps or spot cards, to place them above the maximum height that a cow can reach. The moving sticky tape method may also be useful. This method involves holding a one metre sticky tape in one hand at shoulder height and walking a measured distance in the barn two consecutive times. The result can be calculated and compared to the nuisance threshold, which is 100 house flies per 300 m total walking distance. Outside the barn, all stockpiles should be monitored for house fly maggots on a weekly basis.

### Physical Management of Flies

Maggot infested manure piles that are outside the barn can be tarped using a heavy gauge plastic (black silage plastic). Ensure a tight and complete seal. Alternatively, the pile can be composted by adding fresh manure to old existing piles and turning every 3-4 days. When composting piles, it is best practice to thoroughly scrape the outside edges into the centre. Install tight fitting screens and windows in milk rooms and hang sticky tapes to control small numbers of house flies.

## Cultural Management of Flies

The bedding in calf hutches, calf pens and sick/ calving pens should be cleaned out on a weekly basis. If bedding material is infested, it should be tarped for a minimum of 5 days before use, or composted with existing piles to eliminate fly breeding. It is not advisable to plow or harrow maggot or pupa infested manure into the soil as these life stages will emerge from the soil and potentially cause a fly outbreak. The pack should be inspected on a weekly basis, and any areas with house fly maggots should be removed. House flies prefer fresh manure for breeding so mixing it with old manure makes it less desirable. We do not recommend spreading manure that is infested with house fly maggots or pupa as a field application after May 1st and before November 1st. In free stall and tie stall barns, breeding occurs in moist areas in stalls, under rubber mats, and in feed bunk areas. Therefore, proper drainage and frequent cleaning of these areas is necessary. Wet feed in feed bunks, and accumulations around silos should be cleaned up on a weekly basis.

## Biological Management of Flies

Check with suppliers of biological agents for availability and follow the use instructions. Encourage natural enemies of house flies by composting and using selected cultural practices. Refer to the factsheet 'Integrated Fly Management for Livestock Farms' for information on biological control techniques.

## Chemical Management of Flies

In barns, use space sprays, mists, and residual premise sprays as a last resort for controlling serious fly outbreaks. Wide barn sticky tapes or other types of sticky tapes can be used in barns to control small populations of flies. Manage pesticide resistance by switching product chemical families and reducing frequency of use to a minimum. Refer to the factsheet 'Integrated Fly Management for Livestock Farms' for information on available pesticides and their use. **Always follow the individual pesticide product label for application instructions and allowable uses.**

## Additional Information

Cattle manure, if mixed with straw or sawdust and composted or turned on a regular basis, will not support house fly breeding. Liquid cattle manure generally does not support house fly breeding. This manure is usually spread thinly during the fly season and doesn't normally pose a problem.

## Beef Operations

### Monitoring Techniques

In barns, use baited jug traps and spot cards. Nuisance thresholds are 250 flies per jug trap per week and 50 fly specks per card per week. The moving sticky tape method may also be useful. This method involves holding a one metre sticky tape in one hand at shoulder height and walking a measured distance in the barn two consecutive times. The result can be calculated and compared to the nuisance threshold, which is 100 house flies per 300 m total walking distance. Outside the barn, all stockpiles should be monitored for house fly maggots on a weekly basis

## Physical Management of Flies

Mass trapping of flies in barns can help eliminate a portion of the fly population (ie. Sticky tape and bug zappers). As in all other livestock operations, if manure is stockpiled, it should be tarped to prevent adult flies from laying eggs and to kill existing eggs, larvae and pupae in the manure.

## Cultural Management of Flies

Drainage problems that allow manure to mix with mud and accumulate along fence lines in yards should be eliminated. Also keep vegetation mowed around the barn to help minimize habitat and improve airflow and drainage. Gaps under feed bunks where moist feed can accumulate should be sealed or cleaned out frequently. All fresh manure around barns should be monitored for house fly maggots during the fly season and if the manure becomes infested it should be composted or tarped.

Using an effective pasture rotation or paddock system will help spread manure evenly over the farm and will minimize soil disturbance. The more confined a beef operation is, the higher potential for fly problems.

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*For more information:*  
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