

Ten Steps to Better Fly Control

The one warm weather constant that every horse owner can count on is the challenge of fly control. Not only are flies annoying to humans and horses, they are dangerous in that they have the capability of spreading parasites and the viruses and bacteria that cause several equine diseases. While repellants and insecticides are quite effective in providing quick relief, long-term control requires a comprehensive strategy. Here are 10 suggestions for creating such a strategy.

1. Manage your manure. It takes house and stable flies 10 to 21 days to go from egg to adulthood, so getting rid of fresh manure (one of their preferred breeding environments) on a weekly basis will break their breeding cycle. Either remove the manure from your property or compost it. If you spread your manure, avoid spreading it over pastures that will be used. When you spread, apply the manure in as thin a layer as possible so it dries out quickly.
2. Maintain dry stalls. Stable flies like the smell of urine and they love to lay their eggs in urine-soaked bedding. Get rid of wet bedding at least once a day. Sprinkle hydrated lime over wet spots to help deodorize and dry them out.
3. Dry up puddles and standing water. Stagnant water is an ideal breeding ground for several species of biting flies. Remove debris that collects rainwater, fill in potholes, level areas that hold water, and fix leaky plumbing.
4. Keep drinking water fresh. Rinse and refill water buckets daily. Be careful to dump water in an area where it won't create puddles. Skim algae and debris from troughs daily and top them off with fresh water. Consider adding fish that eat algae, insects, or larvae to large troughs.
5. Keep food off the ground. Food can become a moist inviting breeding ground for flies when it's on the ground so keep your horse's hay and grain in a feeder.
6. Ventilate your barn. Good ventilation is key in keeping your barn dry and uninviting to flying intruders.
7. Throw out the trash. Keeping trash around is akin to laying out a buffet for flies. Keep it sealed and far away from the stable and pasture.
8. Put out traps. These work best in smaller, enclosed areas. They are effective in reducing adult insect populations. Several types are available including baited traps that entice flies with an attractant such as sugary food, tapes and glue traps that use an aromatic glue to catch flies, and physical traps that rely on the fact that horseflies are attracted to dark objects.
9. Dress your horse in protective garments. Ear nets protect against blackflies, Mesh leg wraps are effective against stable flies. Masks protect the eyes from face flies. And, light-colored flysheets act both as a barrier when flies land and deterrent to horseflies, which are attracted to dark colors.
10. Avoid the midday sun. Many biting flies are most active in bright daylight.

References:

Control Flies with Pest Management Program at
http://equisearch.com/magazines/Equus/pestmanagement_051804/
How to Control Those Pesky Flies at www.statelinetack.com/global/articles

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