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Attention cattle and horse owners

A late-season fly surge could be just around the corner

As we move into the latter part of the growing season, it is time to consider late-summer and fall pests, as well as your plans for next year. Both stable and horn fly populations tend to decline over the dry, hot part of summer, but can resurge in late summer into fall if sufficient rainfall occurs.

Horn flies are found on the backs and bellies of animals and remain constantly with their cattle host, making topical insecticides (pour-ons, sprays, and ear tags) effective control methods when used with appropriate chemical rotation. Stable flies, in contrast, feed on the legs of the animal for only a couple of minutes once or twice a day. This low contact time with the host makes chemical control difficult to achieve. Decaying hay and plant material are primary breeding grounds for stable flies. Pay special attention to hay and grain feeding areas surrounding crop fields.

Face flies will enter buildings in the fall, searching for a place to overwinter. Seal off cracks and crevices to remove their access. If a second fall fly population boom occurs, any early-season on-animal interventions applied will likely be ineffective. If reapplying products within the same season, do not change the insecticide group. The Insecticide Resistance Action Committee has created a website where producers can enter the insecticide active ingredient to find which chemical group it belongs to. Check out their website: <https://irac-online.org/mode-of-action/>

Horse owners may be noticing the appearance of small yellow eggs laid on the legs of their horses. All four legs can be targeted, but higher egg numbers are normally observed on the front legs. These eggs are laid by the horse bot fly, with each female laying between 150 and 1000 eggs! Eggs are glued to the hair shaft, and multiple eggs can be laid on a single hair strand.

Eggs hatch within 10 days, stimulated by horse licking and increased humidity. Larvae enter the horse's mouth and embed in the tissue where they remain for roughly 28 days. After molting, second-stage larvae exit the mouth tissues and are swallowed, entering the stomach. The larva can remain in the stomach for 9-12 months, where it molts into the third and final larval stage. After maturing, the third instar detaches from the digestive tract and is passed out in the feces. The larva will burrow into the soil and pupate, remaining there for 1-2 months. As horses tend to create manure piles, the number of flies pupating in an area can become

significant. Adult flies can cause significant fly worry; adverse reactions to flies can lead horses to injure themselves as they try to escape. Under high numbers, reduced grazing can result in weight loss. Significant mouth irritation can occur when first instar larvae burrow into oral tissue, and although horses can tolerate low levels of stomach parasitism, large numbers can cause blockages, colic, and reduced nutrient uptake.

Control can be achieved through a combination of sanitation, egg removal, and the correct timing of an oral dewormer. Removing eggs immediately will significantly reduce the risk of a horse consuming larvae and initiating the infestation cycle. A simple and inexpensive bot egg knife can be used to physically remove eggs from the legs.

Deworming one month after eggs are noticed will kill any second instar larvae that may have been consumed and now reside in the stomach. A second round of dewormer can be administered 6 months after the first dose to remove any third instar larvae. Removing manure piles from the site can reduce the number of adult flies emerging.

Picture attached: Horse bot fly eggs laid in batches attached to the hair of a horse; this horse had well over 700 eggs in total spread across the four legs.

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