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Controlling Common Flies

As we continue to enjoy the outdoors for entertaining, we are plagued by flies wanting to join our parties. Flies seem to be a particular annoyance when they enter human structures. These flies are not only annoying, but they can be a health hazard.

Adult flies have sponging-sucking mouthparts, which they ingest mainly liquid food or food dissolved with regurgitated saliva. This type of mouthpart enables them to contaminate foods, so they can carry diseases such as dysentery, diarrhea, and food poisoning and then spread them to other surfaces.

Houseflies are the most common fly species found in and around homes. The adult flies are between 1/5 to 1/3 inches long and gray in color, with four darker, blackish stripes behind the head. These flies typically breed in garbage cans, commercial trash bins, compost piles, animal excrement, and in other unsanitary conditions. They require 2 to 3 weeks for complete development, from egg to adult. The adults prefer to feed on sugar and protein-rich foods and usually rest in corners or edges of structures.

The blow fly is most commonly seen outdoors, but can be an indoor pest as well. The blow fly female prefers to lay eggs in the flesh of decaying animals. This causes these flies to be found near slaughter houses, meat-processing plants, garbage cans, and dumps. They can become an indoor pest, when a bird or rodent dies within the structure. Blow flies are larger than house flies and have a shiny, metallic black, blue or green body.

Some Control Options:

Non-Chemical Control Options:

- 1) Eliminate breeding sources, by cleaning garbage bins and eliminating standing water. This should reduce the fly population found in and around the home.
- 2) Caulk around doors and windows and install screens on doors and windows to prevent flies from entering structures.
- 3) Install electric flying insect traps containing ultraviolet light to attract and electrocute insects. These should not be placed near doors or eating areas.

Chemical Control Options:

Fly baits, aerosol sprays and residual sprays can be used. These products may contain pyrethrins, resmethrin, and tetramethrin.



Photo: House flies, *Musca domestica* Linnaeus (Diptera: Muscidae), mating. Photo by Bart Drees, Texas A&M University.

Mention of commercial products is for educational purposes only and does not represent endorsement by Texas Cooperative Extension or The Texas A&M University System. Insecticide label registrations are subject to change, and changes may have occurred since this publication was printed. The pesticide user is always responsible for applying products in accordance with label directions. Always read and carefully follow the instructions on the container label.