

LivingWithBugs Guide

identification, life cycles and management

Nuisance Flies

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A number of different types of flies can be a nuisance around homes when they occur in large numbers. Some species (cluster and face flies) may also try to overwinter in attics and walls. Except for cluster flies (see below), the key to controlling common nuisance flies is to locate and eliminate breeding sites.

Flies develop from eggs through larvae (called maggots in the case of flies), pupae and adult flies. Eggs are generally laid on some type of rotting material (animal manure or vegetable matter). Maggots develop in the rotting material. Flies usually pupate some distance away from where they develop. Development time depends on fly species and temperature but under optimum conditions is one to several weeks. Multiple generations occur during warm months.

Cluster flies (Fig. 1). Similar in size and coloration to house flies. The main distinguishing characteristic is the golden hair behind the head on the thorax.

Cluster fly larvae (maggots) develop in the soil inside earthworms. They are earthworm parasites

but apparently don't harm worm populations. They tend to occur most commonly in and around houses near well-kept turf areas that support large earthworm populations.

During fall, flies may aggregate inside houses seeking a place to spend the winter. They form slug-



Figure 1. Cluster fly. Note golden hairs behind head. Original photo by Ken Gray.

gish "clusters" on ceilings and in window wells. While they cause no real harm they can be extremely annoying. Control should be directed at preventing flies from entering the structure by screening vents and sealing cracks. Aggregates of flies in walls or attics can be safely controlled with insecticidal dusts containing boric acid or silica.

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House flies, little house flies, false stable flies, face flies. Maggots (Fig. 2) of these flies all develop in rotting animal or vegetable matter. Manure (animal and human) and garbage of all sorts will support these flies. When the breeding material is present these flies can be produced in huge numbers.

Control is relatively straightforward. Identify the breeding source and remove it. In cases where it is not practical to modify breeding sites such as feed lots, barns and pastures, some relief can be achieved with traps that catch adults. For nuisance flies found indoors, such as food processing plants and restaurants, you can effectively use ultra-violet light traps to catch adult flies.

See www.LivingWithBugs.com for additional information.



Figure 2. House fly larva (maggot). About 1/3" long. Head end is at right, "Eyes" at left end are spiracles used in respiration. Original photo by Ken Gray.