

CALVING EASE

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Editors

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FLIES

Fly Control for Your Calves and Heifers

[Editor: Thanks to Beth Claypoole, Area Extension Educator NWN Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team, Batavia, NY for this letter on fly control.]

Flies can be a menace during the summer months. First, their abundance in the barnyard make working with animals very aggravating as you swat with one hand and treat with the other! Second, flies also annoy the animals to the point of decreased feed intake and increased activity to stay away from biting flies. There are some simple steps that you can take to prevent excessive fly numbers from invading your farm.

Consider Using Parasitic Wasps

A couple of years ago, I participated in a summer fly control study using parasitic wasps to control larvae growth. Results indicated that a combination of fly control (either chemical or parasitic wasps) and scouting for fly pupae were the best control of increasing fly populations throughout the summer.

The wasps in these trials were the non-stinging smaller sized wasps unique to the Northeast, *Muscidifurax raptor*. These wasps are about the size of a fruit fly, and live only to search out, kill, and lay their eggs in fly pupae. It is recommended that the farm release 250 wasps per animal each week during the fly season for May to September. Wasp larvae can be purchased through an insectary. [Editor: Check with your county Cooperative Extension Agent or Integrated Pest Management (IPM) person for names in your area.] But, my own observations indicate that scouting for pupae and cleaning those specific areas of the farm will also decrease fly populations.

Scouting for Fly Maggots

Scouting for fly maggots is the best thing you can do as a calf/heifer manager to prevent excessive fly growth on your farm. Contrary to popular belief, flies will not grow in liquid manure. They like warm and moist areas that can be found all over the barn, barnyard areas and in hutch areas. One area you should scout and make an extra effort to keep clean is the dropped feed area near the feed bunks, especially all that feed dropped on the outside of a J-bunk. Another prime area to scout for fly maggots is inside-feeding areas in calf hutches. Whenever possible, feed calves outside their calf hutches so that you can keep feeding areas free of spilled feed and water.

How to Scout for Fly Maggots

You can scout for areas of egg laying by looking for pupae development. Then you can clean

those specific areas. The pupae are white maggots. They are about one-quarter to one-half inch long. They are usually found in clusters. Be sure to examine spilled feed around feed bunks, silage bunks, semi-dry manure, barn corners, and other areas of spilled feed or silage.

Maggots are also found in calf hutches under water and feed buckets.

Type of Bedding Can Make A Difference

In addition to scouting, choosing the right bedding material will also decrease fly populations. Experiments at the Livestock Insect Laboratory at the USDA in Beltsville, Maryland, compared five different types of bedding to control fly populations in outdoor calf hutches. Sand, sawdust, ground corn cobs, wood chips and straw were compared. Calf hutches were bedded with different materials for a period of six weeks without the material being removed. Results showed that fly populations were greatest in those hutches that were bedded with straw. Sand and sawdust had the lowest fly pupae populations. Observations here in Western New York suggest that newspaper bedding may also help to reduce fly populations.

Timing Clean-Up

When you change bedding will also influence fly growth. The life cycle of the fly takes about two weeks. One week for the larvae to develop and another week for the emergence of the adult. Cleaning once a week or every four to six weeks will break the cycle. Cleaning once every two weeks will NOT break the cycle. You need to either keep the area clean and moisture free or develop a bedded pack and suffocate the pupae.

Combination of Methods May Be Most Effective

Using a combination of scouting for maggots, cleaning these areas, and using an alternative method of fly control (either chemical or parasitic wasps), you should be able to reduce fly populations to a manageable level. Fly populations are expected to peak in mid-July and continue into September. Now is the time to get out and start scouting.

Where to Get Help

If you would like help identifying these maggots and finding areas on your farm for fly egg laying, contact your local Cooperative Extension Office for more help. [Editor: For the majority of our readers, those telephone numbers are (area code 716 unless otherwise noted):]

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|--------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Allegany County | 268-7644 | Monroe County | 461-1000 |
| Cattaraugus County | 699-2377 | Niagara County | 433-8839 |
| Cayuga County | (315) 255-1183 | Ontario County | 394-3977 |
| Chautauqua County | 664-9502 | Orleans County | 589-5561 |
| Erie County | 652-5400 | Seneca County | (315) 539-9251 |
| Genesee County | 343-3040 | Wayne County | (315) 331-8415 |
| Livingston County | 658-3250 | Wyoming County | 786-2251 |

Also, a good reference to use is the Cornell Cooperative Extension Pest Management Recommendations for Livestock and Poultry.

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If you know someone who doesn't currently receive CALVING EASE but would like to, have them **WRITE** to CALVING EASE, 11047 River Road, Pavilion, New York 14525, or **CALL** either 716-584-3122 (Noblehurst Farms' office) or 716-343-8128 (Ofthaus Farms' answering machine), or send a **FAX** to 716-584-3700, or **e-mail** sleadley@servtech.com.