

Stable Fly



Most fly breeding occurs during the warmer summer months December to March or when the 'conditions are right'. There are a number of known fly species in WA but the more common ones are; houseflies, bush flies, blowflies and stable flies.

Stable or 'horse fly' as it is also known, is a biting, blood sucking insect that causes discomfort and distress to animals and people by the painful bite it inflicts when obtaining a blood meal. Horses and cattle are its primary hosts and are most vulnerable to attack.

The stable fly is most prominent in rural, semi rural areas where there is mix of horticulture, hobby farms and animal industries or where there is use of poultry manure. Restrictions on the sale, supply and use of poultry manure has reduced the breeding and prevalence of stable flies, however other sources of breeding still exist.

Most nuisance flies breed in similar environments where they can obtain moisture and nutrients they need to breed and multiply. The main sources are; decaying vegetable material, putrescible waste (food scraps), animal manure, open compost heaps and grass clippings left in piles.

Horticulturalists, livestock owners and householders are encouraged to make sure they have plans in place to manage stable fly.

Steps that can be taken to prevent fly breeding are:

- Make sure putrescible waste (food scraps) are wrapped tightly in 3-4 sheets of newspaper or bagged, before placing in the bin.
- Not leaving uneaten pet food lying around. Treat as above.
- If making compost, use a purpose built compost bin (with lid) or tumbler. Open compost heaps can provide a perfect environment for fly breeding.
- If keeping poultry, keep yards and cages clean by removing manure on a regular basis and particularly, removing any wet manure.
- Regularly pick up dog faeces and seal in plastic bags >then to bin.
- Not leaving grass clippings in a pile as this will create a ready source for fly breeding. Spread clippings out thinly over the garden bed.
- When applying animal manures to the garden, dig them well into the soil. Avoid using fresh manure and look for conditioned, aged manure or better still use compost.
- If using manure as fertiliser for larger scale farming, ensure that the manure is spread thinly and/or dug in as soon as possible, with no stockpiling.
- There are pesticides that can be used to control flies. The best form of control for adult flies around the home is aerosol Pyrethrin products. These provide rapid 'knock down' of flies.

It is also possible to apply a residual spray to external areas (patio structure, windows, eaves), to deter flies from entering the home. The householder should seek advice from the retailer and or read the product label before selecting and using a product. It needs to be suitable for the purpose and there may be safety precautions.

Dr McPharlin from the Department of Agriculture, has advised that, "The department has developed a series of factsheets, available online, which detail the steps each affected industry group should take to control and manage stable fly," Factsheets can be found at:

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/bam/management-plans>

The Department of Agriculture can also be contacted for further information on stable flies and their control.



Pictured is rotting hay which has been identified as a source of stable fly breeding on the Swan Coastal Plain. Horticulturalists and livestock owners are encouraged to make sure they have plans in place to manage stable fly this season.