

Pointers to help keep nuisance flies out of your parlour this summer

Create your own 'no-fly' zone

It won't be long before flies in the dairy parlour have producers hankering for those cold, but fly-free, winter months. Biting and nuisance flies around cattle cause serious disruption to milking and can spread infectious diseases. But there's plenty that producers can do to minimise fly problems, as well as products that they can arm themselves with to tackle the winged enemy.

text **Rachael Porter**

A kilogramme of manure will produce around 10,000 flies. "So practical steps include keeping manure away from the parlour and buildings – cleanliness really is next to godliness when it comes to fly control," says The Dairy Group's dairy housing consultant Brian Pocknee.

"If there's no muck then there are no flies."

He explains that flies don't like air movement. "If there's a breeze outside, you don't see flies around.

So fans in the parlour, the collecting yard and housing are also a good idea. They will help to combat heat stress, as well as keeping the flies away," he says. Flies prefer shaded to brightly lit areas. "So again, if your parlour's well lit, it will help to keep the flies out."

There are also some other products that help reduce fly numbers around cattle housing and in the parlour. These 'knock down' products, such as SpY and Oxyfly, can be used alternately on building walls and anywhere where flies roost.

They will kill flies for about a month, after which a product with a different active ingredient should be used, before switching back again for another month. "I recommend using a 'knock down' product, such as Ficam W, for a month before switching to an 'attractant' like Bayt," says XLVets' James Allcock, from the Lambert, Leonard and May vet practice, near Whitchurch in Shropshire. "Resistance means that the efficacy of these products will wane after a month. If you have a million flies and just two are resistant it won't take long for most to

become resistant due to the rapid life cycle of the fly – it's just a week long. So regularly switching products is vital to success."

He likes these low-cost and easy-to-use products as they're highly effective and producers can see that they're working: "There will be a swathe of dead flies along the bottom of a wall or metal shed panel where they've been applied."

Knock-down sprays, such as Sorex Super fly spray, electric and chemical fly traps and sticky fly papers can also be effective at killing adult flies.

Sticky ribbons

Brightly coloured sticky ribbons and bands – around nine metres long and half a metre wide and sometimes with pictures of flies on them to attract other flies – fitted close to parlour doorways can help to keep fly out.

"But with all these products, we're still not getting to the root of the problem."

With 85% of all flies on farm being in the developing maggot and pupae stages, Mr Allcock says that the key to successful fly control is to attack the problem at source.

"And this can be done by using fly parasites – tiny insects that search out and kill developing flies.

Distributing these parasites around the breeding sites of flies every fortnight significantly reduces the number of flies that develop into adulthood."

Fly parasites

His practice brought Clover Fly Parasites to the UK in 2007. When released near muck, these fly parasites – comprising two indigenous species called *Muscidifurax raptor* and *Spalangia cameroni* – will burrow into it and kill the developing maggots and pupae of house flies and stable flies.

In trials at Kansas State University, regular release of fly parasites reduced numbers of stable flies by between 25% and 50%.

A 100-cow unit requires one bag of parasites, containing 50,000 parasitised

Protection at grazing

For cattle out grazing, a range of deltamethrin pour-on products, including Butox SWISH, Spot-on, Deosect or Flypor, are the main means of control for many herds.

These are very effective at killing adult flies and are ideal for use on heifers, for example, that have been turned out to grass that's close to shaded or wooded areas, or near water courses, and are being plagued by flies.

fly pupae and costing £45, to be distributed near muck once a fortnight from late spring through to late September.

Around 1 in 20 of the normal UK fly population carry the fly parasites – part of a family known as pteromalid wasps. "And by boosting the local parasite population on a fortnightly basis, we're looking to push that figure up to more than 50%," explains Mr Allcock.

"The trick is to keep a tight lid on fly multiplication. We don't want to completely kill off the parasites' host. But we want to significantly reduce the number of adult flies in and around livestock housing and milking parlours.

"And since the flies have a head start – their lifecycle is only a week long compared to three weeks for the parasite – the right balance can be struck by regularly topping up the parasite population.

Depending on how active the parasites are when released, peak parasitism usually occurs two weeks after release. In hot weather parasites are only active for about a week," he adds.

Biological control

This means that 'biological control' only kills flies at the pupae stage, so it's vital that producers continue to use pour-on products, as well as 'knock down' and 'attractant' residual products. This keeps the adult fly population in check, as well as helping to keep flies away from livestock and out of housing and parlours.

"The parasites offer the chance to take a two-pronged approach to tackling the problem, but they are not the whole solution," says Mr Allcock.

"For a fly-free parlour, producers should be looking at using a mixture of practical measures, as well as biological and chemical products, throughout the summer." |



Fly control pointers – the five 'p's

- **Practical:** stack manure well away from buildings, cow tracks and livestock. And remember that flies like shaded areas, but don't like air movement. So install fans and make sure that the parlour is well lit.
- **Pour-ons:** protect livestock, particularly heifers away from the farm that are close to wooded areas and watercourses.
- **Paint:** walls and metal work that attract 'roosting' flies should be

painted with knock-down residual or attractant products that kills adult flies after contact.

- **Paper:** fly paper can also be stuck around doorways and other fly hot spots to keep livestock buildings free of flies.
- **Parasites:** scatter one bag (50,000 fly parasites) per 100 cows in and around muck and slurry storage areas and along the edge of bedded housing areas every fortnight.