

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

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“Shoo Fly Don’t Bother Me”

We are heading in to the middle of summer and flies on our livestock are still a common problem we deal with. Fly bites are painful and irritating for livestock. Some animals may have more severe reactions to these bites, and be left with bite marks. Heavy fly burden can also cause a loss of gains in our livestock through constant irritation or the onset of Pinkeye. The four common flies we tend to deal with are horn, stable, house, and face flies. Several steps can be taken to prevent fly populations in our pastures and pens. First, we will look at how each common type operates.

Horn flies hang around the back and belly of livestock. Animals will be seen tossing their head back frequently in an attempt to get the flies off. They reproduce in fresh manure, and as such are typically seen on cattle in or near pastures. Stable flies hang around the legs of livestock. Animals will be seen stomping frequently in an attempt to rid their legs of the flies as the stable fly bite is very painful. They reproduce in decomposing plant materials. Houseflies are rarely seen on animals, but instead hang around feeding areas being attracted to high sugar feed sources. They can reproduce anywhere and are one of the most difficult flies to control. Finally, face flies are mostly seen out in pasture as they also reproduce in fresh manure. As their name suggests, they are seen on the face of animals, and carry bacteria that causes Pinkeye.

The key to prevention for these common flies is to eliminate areas for flies to reproduce by intensive sanitization practices. Each time we look out our livestock and see flies they are not the same ones each time. The flies are feeding for their blood meal and leaving when full to head for vegetation and reproduce. Each female can lay a couple hundred eggs ever couple of days, which is approximately 500 eggs over her lifetime. By eliminating places they can reproduce, we can lower the amount of flies entering the population.

We will first look at ways of preventing flies that reproduce in fresh manure. Burning pastures in early spring will destroy pupae held over from winter. You can also promote strong dung beetle populations in our pastures, who will remove the manure the flies reproduce. This will also reduce the instances of gastrointestinal nematodes. If you see large amounts of flies sitting on animals and gates this is an indication of a high fly population. Sanitation is crucial. Identify breeding habits by looking for moist areas in lots that are not disturbed for by livestock traffic. Then dig up a few spots and look for fly larvae and pupae. Remove excess dirt, manure, and bedding that is moist to keep livestock areas dry. These methods will help eliminate breeding areas and decrease fly populations.

Another method for fly prevention we can utilize is insecticide application. When using insecticides the most effective method is a three-year rotation of the same base ingredient

products. This will allow us to avoid resistance development to the products used. Begin in year one using pyrethrum based products only. In year two, use only organophosphate based products. Then finally, in year three use only macrocyclic lactone based products. In year four, we can start the rotation over again. Fly ear tags work great for horn and face flies as the livestock toss their head to move flies they will distribute the active ingredient across the body. We just have to be sure we are using tags with the correct active ingredient in connection with the designated ingredient used for that year. Most manufacturer labels for fly tags state they are good for 4-5 months. However, they are actually only effective for 90-100 days per research. Therefore, we need to ensure we are removing those around the 90-day mark and applying new tags. Back rubbers, and feeder flaps impregnated with insecticide are also useful application tools as livestock can self-apply the insecticide saving time and labor. Stable flies that feed on livestock's legs can be harder to treat with a pour on, feeder flap, or back rubber applicator. Therefore, we can use hand sprayers to apply insecticide. Insecticides need to be applied to the area the flies are feeding so that they can ingest the product. Finally, we can also apply product to fences and gates for residual prevention. This especially applies to houseflies. Follow all chemical application instructions to the T.

Information comes from K-State Veterinarian Entomologist Dr. Cassandra Olds.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.