

Flies Advice Leaflet

There are three main types of flies that affect domestic properties. This advice sheet aims to provide you with information on the following:

1. A description of the most common flies
2. The preferred habitat, life cycle and causes of flies
3. What can be done to prevent and treat for flies?



1. A description of the most common flies

A Common Housefly

The Common Housefly and the Lesser Housefly both range between 6 and 8mm long. The Common Housefly has dark longitudinal stripes and a central dark band. When resting, wings are spread. The Lesser Housefly has 3 longitudinal stripes, with a yellow patch at the base of the abdomen. The wings are folded back when resting.

2. The preferred habitat, life cycle and causes of flies

Common Houseflies are ubiquitous insects, with a flight range of approximately 5 miles. When indoors, they are highly active. They generally begin to appear in late May, and reach a population peak during August and September, with breeding generally ceasing in October. After this period, flies can “over-winter” as adults or pupae. However, in warmer areas houseflies can remain active and reproduce throughout the year.

Females will begin producing eggs 48 hours after they have emerged as an adult. During her adult life, approximately 1-3 months, she is capable of producing 4-5 batches of 100-150 eggs. These hatch within 48 hours into smooth, white legless maggot larvae and after 3 moults mature into pupae. Approximately 3-4 weeks after this they develop into adult flies.

Lesser Houseflies can often be found in poultry houses. Their flight pattern is erratic, and they are often seen flying in large numbers around indoor light fittings. The Lesser Housefly generally appears in March, slightly earlier than the Common Housefly due to their increased resistance to colder temperatures. They are prevalent from April to October, and survive the winter in the form of pupae, although as with the Common Housefly if temperatures allow they can be active throughout the winter period.

Lesser Houseflies breed prolifically in poultry manure, but will also breed in other moist decaying matter. Egg laying begins after the adult female is 10 days old, with maggots hatching within 24-48 hours. Larval development takes approximately 8-10 days, with development from egg to adult taking about 3 weeks.

Flies can sometimes travel long distances during which they can transmit intestinal worms (or worm eggs) and are potential vectors of diseases such as dysentery, gastroenteritis, typhoid, cholera and tuberculosis. They will frequent and feed indiscriminately on any liquefiable solid food.

3. What can be done to prevent and treat for flies?

Flies can breed rapidly and have high levels of mobility. To break the lifecycle, control measures need to target the larval and adult flies.

Satisfactory hygiene levels are required. Domestic refuse must be stored in sealed containers. Fly screens, air curtains, bead screens, or self-closing doors equipped with rubber flaps should be used where possible to prevent entry into properties.

Insecticides should be used to complement good hygiene.