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Controlling Face Flies On Beef Cattle

Hugh W. Homan
Extension Entomologist

Robert L. Stoltz
Extension Entomology Specialist

The face fly is a pest of range and pasture livestock in all areas of Idaho. This fly poses a serious problem to livestock producers because it is associated with a high incidence of livestock eye disorders.

This nonbiting fly feeds on the moisture and secretions about the eyes and muzzle of cattle, horses and sheep. Its feeding habits cause increased tear production and eye swelling. The face fly is involved in the mechanical transmission of disease organisms to the eye. In addition, it will feed upon blood or exudate (ooze) from fresh wounds and saliva deposits.

The presence and feeding of this persistent insect also causes extreme annoyance and irritation to its hosts. Infested livestock may bunch together or seek dense shade and refuse to feed. Face flies are usually not a pest of confined cattle unless they are adjacent to pastured cattle.

The face fly is also a household pest because of its habit of hibernating in attics and interwall areas of houses, barns, churches and other buildings. On warm days during the winter and early spring, they move into living areas and become active pests.

Habitat and Life Cycle

Face flies were recorded for the first time in northern Idaho in 1965. By 1967, they were found in all areas of the state. Natural enemies have stabilized the population since that time. Since face fly populations can increase rapidly, cattle must be checked often.

Face flies are troublesome on livestock during most of the summer. The flies prefer bright sunshine and usually do not follow livestock into dense shade or buildings.

Eggs are laid only in undisturbed, fresh cattle droppings. Face fly maggots develop in the droppings, pupate in dry areas of droppings or in the surrounding soil and emerge as adults. Development from egg to adult requires 10 to 21 days. Successive generations occur during the warm months of the year.

Controls

Face flies are able to move long distances in short periods of time, so "treated" livestock may be continually reinfested. In addition, less than 5 percent of the face fly population is found on livestock at any one time. Thus, effective control must include repeated insecticide applications to the faces of animals. This is difficult to achieve unless animals are handled every day, as in the case of milking dairy cows, or unless effective self-application insecticide dispensers are used. Face flies are susceptible to many insecticides.

For beef cattle on rangeland and for most pastured stock, properly constructed back- and face-rubber combinations or dust bags should reduce face fly numbers and control horn flies. The animals must be forced to use these **self-treating devices**, and the applicators must be constructed so that the faces of the animals are treated. Devices can be put up in doorways, on corral gates, above salt-mineral boxes, between pasture and water, etc. where animals are forced to use them frequently.

Many commercial applicator units are available. Some are constructed so that animals have to treat their faces. Others are designed only for horn fly control and are less effective in controlling face flies.

Rabon and phenothiazine as **feed additives** give varying degrees of face fly maggot control in cattle

droppings. Adequate face fly control is seldom achieved by this method, however, because treated herds are continually subjected to reinfestation of face flies from untreated herds. For successful control with this method alone, a herd would have to be completely isolated from other infested livestock by considerable distances or natural barriers.

Spraying or dipping is an effective but not a practical method of control on beef cattle. **Ear tags** are also effective, but the tags are commonly lost in brushy pastures.

PRECAUTIONS

All insecticides are poisons. Read the label on the package and follow precautions carefully. Avoid contaminating the skin, eyes and clothing with any pesticide. To protect pastured animals, feed and food crops in neighboring fields, avoid excessive drift. Do not contaminate milk, utensils or feed. To protect fish and wildlife, keep pesticides out of ponds and streams. Keep pesticides away from children and domestic animals, and safely dispose of used containers.

WARNING

The recommendations in this publication are based on the best information currently available for each chemical listed. If recommendations are followed carefully, residues should not exceed the tolerance established for any particular chemical. To avoid excessive residues, follow recommendations carefully with respect to dosage levels, number of applications and minimum interval between applications. The cattleman is responsible for residues.

Face Fly Control on Beef Cattle

Insecticide	Method of application
Ciodrin	S, B
Ciovap	S, B
CoRal	D*, B
Ectrin	E
Korlan	B*
Malathion	D*
Methoxychlor	B*
Phenothiazine	F
Rabon	F, D, E*
Vapona	S

*Helps control face flies

Key for chemical formulations:

B = Backrubber
D = Dust
E = Ear tag
F = Feed trough
S = Spray

Brand names have been used for convenience only.
No preference is intended or implied.

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