



# The Pennsylvania IPM Program



## House Flies: IPM Controls Near Your Home

Notes from the SWAT team

House flies are commonly seen during warm and humid conditions. They are known to congregate in houses and barns, hence giving them their name. To control flies around the home a plan of integrated pest management (IPM) should be implemented. The basics of IPM fly control are listed below.

### Scouting / Inspection:

Look around the home for areas where flies congregate and are feeding or laying eggs. Barbecues, trash containers, piles of vegetation and pet areas are possible places of fly feeding or breeding. House flies are natural composters and will seek rotting vegetation and other high protein food sources in order to feed and breed, especially if it is moist or wet. Flies also regulate their body temperature much like reptiles, so that you will find them either on southern exposures or in or near garages, and soffit overhangs. In addition, flies are attracted to light colors, so white trim and window frames will be logical places of attraction.

Fly populations can be monitored using “speck cards”. Wherever flies congregate they deposit feces leaving small “specks” on surfaces and buildings. “Speck cards” are white 3”x5” cards otherwise known as index cards. These may be purchased at office supply and other stores. Tack or tape the cards to the surface where flies have been seen. Count weekly how many fly specks are found on the cards. Counts over 100 will mean some action for control should be taken.

### Weigh options of control and apply accordingly:

How many flies do you have? The IPM approach recommends that multiple methods be used to combat fly populations, and that management efforts be tailored to the fly population severity. Available controls include (in order of preferred IPM use):

- **Clear and clean** – Pick up all trash, animal droppings and other food sources of flies. Wash out all refuse containers and keep them away from entry points to the homes. Removing food and water sources is the most effective way to control and prevent house fly infestations. Water is a necessity for flies and the drying of all bedding and manure near stables and other livestock enclosures will assist in house fly control.
- **Make a Fly-tight House** – Check all windows and doors to be sure they are fly-tight. If you can see light under the door you can assume a fly will be able to pass through. Also check duct pipes to bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans. These should be screened during heavy fly periods. Be sure to close your chimney flues as well.
- **Use Passive Controls** – Fly paper strips, attractant bottle/bag traps, and in some cases electric fly zappers can help reduce fly numbers. Be sure to follow all instructions with the particular method you are using. Hang bottle/bag traps low to the ground in full sun **AWAY** from the structure you wish to protect, and service them regularly. Fly

zappers should be used only indoors as they will attract other insects to their location if placed outside. Place them on timers to work at night in rooms that receive natural light.

- **Use Natural Controls** – Fly predators can be purchased for control of major infestations. These parasites of the house fly do not harm people and should be spread on regular intervals during the fly season in known fly breeding areas. Be sure to adequately measure the level of fly activity in order to apply enough fly predators for effective control. Be aware that conventional pesticide sprays and other adult fly chemical controls will affect these beneficial insects as well, and may have to be re-established if a spray application is made in the area.
- **Chemical Controls** – Use as a last resort to help reduce fly resistance to chemicals. Be sure to follow all instructions and apply only as needed. Yard foggers and other “knock down” materials are only effective for short periods of time. Fly baits can suppress populations for longer time periods. Do not use pesticides near food or other highly sensitive areas. Be sure to dispose of containers properly.

### **Review and Consider:**

After two weeks of applying a new control, review how well the control is working by observing “speck card” counts. Adjust the management program as necessary.

By using an IPM program you systematically work through a plan to anticipate and control fly numbers without using strong chemicals unless warranted. Adherence to IPM approaches typically reduce the cost of control. In addition, the IPM steps outlined above continue to perform even when the homeowner is not there.

### **Gregory P. Martin, Ph.D., PAS**

Extension Educator, Poultry – Capital Region

[gpm10@psu.edu](mailto:gpm10@psu.edu)

---

**SWAT** – Is an integrated team of extension educators, industry, and farm individuals interested in animal IPM and the control of flies in rural and suburban locations. For more information on IPM, please review the PA IPM website at: <http://paipm.cas.psu.edu/index.html>

---

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. It is the policy of the University to maintain an academic and work environment free of discrimination, including harassment. The Pennsylvania State University prohibits discrimination and harassment against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Discrimination or harassment against faculty, staff, or students will not be tolerated at The Pennsylvania State University. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 328 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5901, Tel 814-865-4700/V, 814-863-1150/TTY.