1981 Recommendations for Fly Control in Caged Layer Buildings

Robert D. Hall and Flernoy G. Jones
Department of Entomology, College of Agriculture

House flies, blow flies, soldier flies and other non-biting flies can and often do become a problem in poultry buildings. They do not bite or feed on the birds but may carry diseases because of their habit of feeding on manure, dead birds and other waste materials.

Poultry manure is an excellent developmental material for fly larvae. Caged layer operations concentrate a large amount of manure in a relatively small area and therefore create an ideal situation for producing many flies. Flies and odor coming from poorly managed buildings may result in legal action against the producer.

This guide gives recommendations for controlling flies only in caged layer operations where the birds are not in contact with the floor or litter. Properly managed floor operations seldom have a fly problem. Contact the Department of Entomology, University of Missouri-Columbia, for recommendations on controlling flies in a floor operation.

Control

Effective and economical fly control depends on: (1) good sanitation practices to remove fly breeding areas, (2) proper use of insecticides to kill adult flies, (3) treatment of manure with an insecticide to control maggots if needed, and (4) good management practices throughout the year, especially in controlled environment buildings.

Sanitation

The first and most important step in fly control is prompt and regular removal of waste material where flies breed. This includes waste feed, broken eggs and dead birds. Fly eggs are laid on wet, decaying material. The maggots that hatch from these eggs cannot develop in manure or other material that is dry.

Keep droppings dry. Repair water leaks, both in water supply lines and building roofs. Soldier fly infestations usually start around the outside of open buildings where rain and snow have blown onto the manure and made it wet.

The caged layer operator has two options available when considering the frequency of manure removal.

Weekly Removal. Removing manure once each week during the active fly season (May through October) and throughout the year in controlled environment buildings doesn’t allow sufficient time for the maggots to develop into adult flies. Predators and parasites that feed on the eggs and maggots also are removed. Occasional insecticide treatment to control adult flies may be needed.

Occasional Removal. The manure is allowed to cone up under the cages and dry and is removed once or twice a year. The predators and parasites develop to their maximum. If manure becomes wet, flies will become a problem. Occasional insecticide treatment to control adult flies may be necessary as well as occasional spot treatment of manure to control maggots. Removing the manure from under one row of cages at a time instead of cleaning an entire building will leave a stock of insects and mites to move into the new manure.

The manure that is removed should be thinly spread in fields and not piled outside the buildings.

If good sanitation practices are followed, less insecticide will be needed and that used will be more effective.

Fly Control in Open Houses

Acceptable fly control in open houses requires strict attention to sanitation and manure management, supplemented with the use of insecticides as baits, residual sprays and spot treatment of manure for maggot control.

Baits consist of an insecticide and an attractant which serves to draw flies to the insecticide. Start spreading the bait as soon as flies begin to be numerous. Place bait where flies congregate during the day: window ledges, doorways, on the floor between cages etc.

During the first four or five days, scatter dry bait heavily enough that it can be seen. Continue to put out bait each day for the next week, but lesser amounts can be used. After the first 10 days, apply bait every two to four days to those places where the most flies were killed during the initial baiting.

To make a liquid bait, mix the proper amount of insecticide with water and add sugar, corn syrup or molasses. Follow the directions on the container label. Use a sprinkling can to spread the bait on the floor. Where a dirt floor is present or the floor is dirty, apply the bait on pieces of burlap, cardboard etc. Apply new, fresh bait every two to four days.

Continue to use bait regularly during the summer. DON’T stop as soon as fly numbers are knocked down. If you do and the numbers build up, you will have to start all over again with the heavy initial baiting.
General Precautions: Do not apply non-registered materials directly to poultry or within poultry houses. To do so may cause the meat or eggs to become contaminated and unsalable. Be sure to read and follow the safety precautions given on the label of the container.

* An asterisk (*) preceding any insecticide means that all or some uses of the product have been restricted by the Environmental Protection Agency. Applicators must be certified before they may purchase restricted products.