



FLY LIFE-CYCLES THREE WEEKS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

The mild March and warm early April weather means fly life cycles are two to three weeks ahead of schedule this year, meaning livestock farmers need to make an early start with their control measures.

“It may have been a long, cold winter in many areas, but it’s a myth that prolonged freezing temperatures kill off over-wintering blowfly populations. They overwinter as maggots in the ground where they are well protected. And the warm early spring temperatures are already helping to speed up development so that adult fly populations will soon start to build. As a result we are planning to treat stock much earlier this year,” reports applied biologist, Professor Richard Wall from Bristol University.

As the weather warms up, there are two main groups of flies which cause problems for cattle producers: flies which bite and feed on blood; and flies which feed on the secretions from the eyes, nose, udder and the sweat on the animal’s coat and skin.

Within the two groups there are a number of different types of flies, some of which transmit disease, and others which are just a plain nuisance, but still distract the cow from feeding.

“Control of flies around your livestock involves a combination of applying insecticides directly onto the animal, feeding Supalyx/Rumevite garlic-based supplements, which create an invisible odour barrier around animals to deter flies from landing, and cleaning up potential breeding sites,” says David Thornton from Rumenco.

“Understanding how your own farm appeals to flies is an important step forward in better fly control. In fact, knowing where and when flies are breeding and then

taking action to restrict the potential farm fly population is just as important as controlling flies on or around the animals.”

David Thornton says flies prefer damp, sheltered areas where they are protected from the wind and can find shade during the heat of the day. “So if your stock are susceptible to summer mastitis or New Forest Eye disease, for example – which are transmitted by the head and face flies respectively – dry cows and maiden heifers particularly should be grazed on fields away from trees and water courses.

“Most of the flies that bite cattle breed in dung or decomposing vegetable matter, and near water, so it is important to ensure their proliferation opportunities are as limited as possible by eliminating breeding hotspots around the farm – or keeping livestock well away from water – and good hygiene. And it’s a good idea to remove soiled bedding, spilled feed and silage at least once a week,” he says.

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Picture supplied:

Blowfly maggots: despite the cold winter, blowfly maggots, in particular, will have survived deep in the soil and the warm, early spring temperatures mean fly life cycles generally are ahead of schedule, meaning livestock are already under threat from fly populations.

Date: 11 April 2011

Further information from:

David Thornton
Rumenco technical manager
Tel: 01283 524257/07778 622628

Issued by David Butler, ABC Ltd
Tel: 01694 731777 E-mail: david@abccomms.co.uk

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