

House Fly



Peggy K. Powell, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist – Pesticide Impact

The house fly *Musca domestica* is one of the most common household pests in the world. Besides being a pesky nuisance, it is also a public health threat, capable of transporting many disease-causing microorganisms on its body.

Identification, Biology, and Habits

The house fly has four life stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. The adult fly is 1/4-inch long and light gray, with four dark lengthwise stripes on its thorax, and reddish eyes. House fly larvae, called "maggots," are about 3/8-inch long, creamy white, and spindle-shaped. Accurate identification is an important element in control.

Control begins with removing the maggots' food source.

House flies belong to a group of flies known as "filth flies." This name comes from the female flies' habit of laying their eggs in moist, decaying organic materials such as garbage and manure; the maggots feed on and develop in the material. Control begins with removing the maggots' food source. There are many different species of flies that look alike but breed in different materials. The species of fly must be accurately identified before its breeding area can be determined.

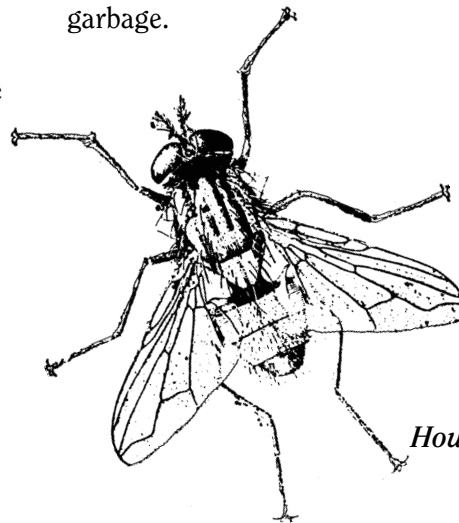
Prevention Methods

The main elements of house fly prevention are sanitation and exclusion, with sanitation always the first priority. The fewer flies that breed in an area, the fewer there will be to make their way indoors. Studies have shown that approximately 50 percent of the house flies in urban areas

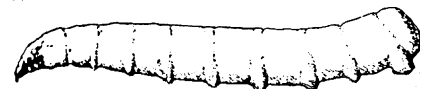
originate from improperly disposed of household garbage and another 15 percent from dog waste.

The main elements of house fly prevention are sanitation and exclusion, with sanitation always the first priority.

Reduce or eliminate fly breeding areas by proper disposal of garbage and dog waste. Be sure your garbage cans have tight-fitting lids and are kept closed. Rinse food containers and meat wrappers before placing them in the trash. Rinse recyclables before storing them. If your trash goes into a dumpster, make sure your garbage is tightly wrapped before disposal. Scoop up and dispose of dog waste by burying it, flushing it down the toilet, or wrapping it securely and placing it in the garbage.



House fly adult and larva



Exclusion techniques deny flies access to the inside of your home. The most basic exclusion technique is the use of screens on windows and doors. Make sure the screens fit properly and are kept in good repair. Inspect them each spring and repair any holes or tears. Automatic door closing devices on outside doors can be used as a supplemental exclusion method.

Control Strategies

If you have only a few flies to kill, control can be as simple as an old-fashioned fly swatter. Sticky fly paper strips are still available, but these can be unattractive. Newer types of sticky fly traps, baited with house fly sex attractant and designed to be placed on window sills, are now available in supermarkets and discount stores. Traps that can be baited with a food substance are available for use outdoors.

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Cornmeal mixed with molasses is a good bait. Be sure to hang the trap in a sunny area.

Pyrethrin and pyrethroid sprays and foggers are available for controlling house flies indoors. Be sure to read and follow label directions and to ventilate the room after using them. To achieve lasting control, these less toxic chemicals must be combined with sanitation measures. Beware of insecticide-impregnated pest strips—the insecticide they contain can be very poisonous.

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