

NAVAN VETERINARY SERVICES – JUNE 2016 NEWSLETTER

With the return of warm, humid weather brings the return of the annual scourge of flies. Barn or stable flies, house, face and horn flies seem to be the main species that cause issues on your dairy.

Barn flies are biting flies that feed on blood. We all know these pests because of their piercing mouth parts which leave a painful bite (at least in my experience!). Dairy cows exposed to stable flies have been shown to have lower milk production. It's not a stretch of the imagination to see how irritated the cows become and how much energy they spend trying to get flies off their backs and flanks, especially those unlucky victims of tail docking.

Besides their annoyance, biting flies can spread disease like leukosis virus among herd mates. Because these flies feed on animals blood, control products like Fly-Baits will not work very effectively. Other filth flies, like house and blow flies feed on dead decaying matter and will be better controlled with insecticide-type baits.

Face flies can be a real problem on some farms as they are implicated in the spread of the agent causing pinkeye in cows, *Moraxella bovis*. Face flies do not pierce the skin but feed on the mucus secretions of the eyes, nose and mouth. Pinkeye is a painful, irritating condition causing excess tearing. The resulting wet faces tend to attract more face flies which will spread the infection to neighbouring cows.

The best way to control pinkeye is to discourage flies from staying in the barn. Good air movement tends to stop flies from sticking around. Eliminating dead air spots, where we all know flies love to congregate is another challenge. Knock-down insecticides along with keeping barns clean of manure will aid in controlling fly populations.

Face and horn flies can be a problem on pasture, where bread heifers and dry cows often spend time. We recommend applying insecticide fly-tags to these animals. The insecticide

works by being absorbed slowly through the skin (mainly back and flanks) as the cows groom themselves.

For cows and calves with pinkeye, there are several effective treatment protocols, but getting at them early will have the best prognosis. If treated too late, total loss of vision is a real possibility. Topical treatment (for early infections) with products like the intramammary antibiotic Special Formula seems to work quite well. Recommended dosage is two drops twice a day for seven days. This is obviously an extra-label use of this product and will require a veterinary prescription for CQM purposes.

Long acting oxytetracyclines have a label dose for pinkeye treatment and is also very effective. Only to be used on non lactating cows and heifers as there will be antibiotic residue concerns.

For very advanced cases of the disease, sub-conjunctival injections (directly injected into eye) of antibiotic works well. Pinkeye disease can occur as small outbreaks, therefore prompt treatment and environmental control of flies is critical to break the cycle.