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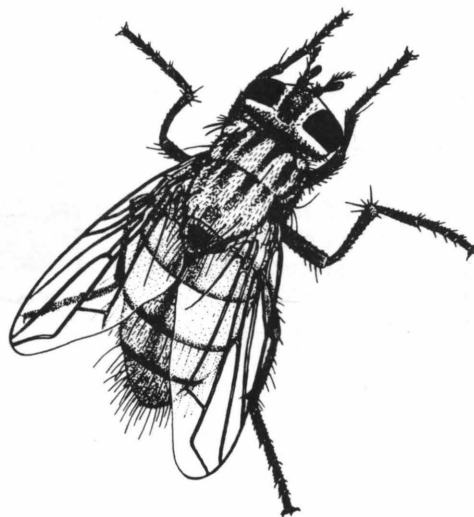


INSECT NOTES

SUMMER 1991

There are several common household insect pests that seem to increase their presence and nuisance level during the hot days of August. These include flies, bees and wasps, and some species of ants. Let's review their general biology and control.

House flies - Although they are common throughout the year, large and annoying house fly populations can develop rapidly during the hot days of August. The increased temperatures and the presence of adults from larvae maturing in July can lead to large populations in favorable breeding sites. House flies are attracted to and breed primarily in garbage. The adults can fly a mile or more to find a favorable site, once there the females lay eggs and the larval stage (maggots) can develop to adults in about 10 days (in the hot days and nights of August). Unless trash containers are washed regularly, and kept away from doors of food service establishments--house flies can become serious. Sanitation is the best "first step" since house flies have developed resistance to many insecticides, and wild populations (for example, around dumpsters) probably have some level of insecticide resistance.



Cluster flies - These large, robust flies are usually pests in the fall and winter when they fly around windows. They overwinter in large numbers as adults in attics and wall voids (thus the common name cluster flies and attic flies). Cluster flies begin entering houses in late August--when the weather is warm, and the adult flies are active. The immature stages of this fly attack and feed on earthworms, and there are probably two or three generations per year. The adults from the last generation overwinter in attics,

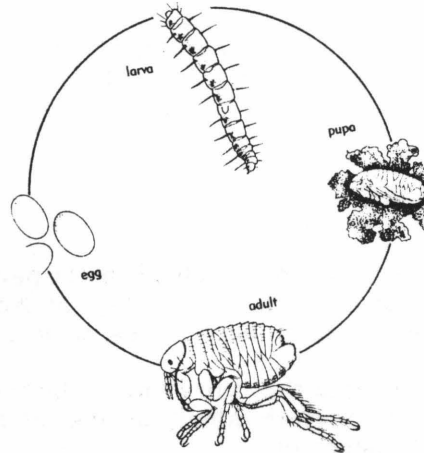
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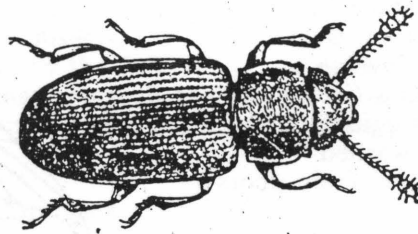
then leave these locations in the spring to lay eggs in the soil. Houses with a history of infestation should be sprayed on the outside in late August and early September. Hanging no-pest strips in the attic may also help.

Cat flea infestations - The hot and humid summer of 1991 will probably provide some serious household flea infestations in the last summer. There is little that vacuuming can do to eliminate the flea larvae that are nestled deep in the carpet pile, but regular vacuuming can remove many of the eggs that fall off the pet dog or cat.

Total-release aerosol ("Bombs") cans are rarely effective in controlling large populations of household fleas--and setting off too many cans at one time can lead to an explosion! Aerosol directed at the carpet where pest regularly sleep can be effective, as can calling a professional pest control operator for a total-house treatment. Whenever the house is treated, the pets must also be treated--or the house will become reinfested quickly.

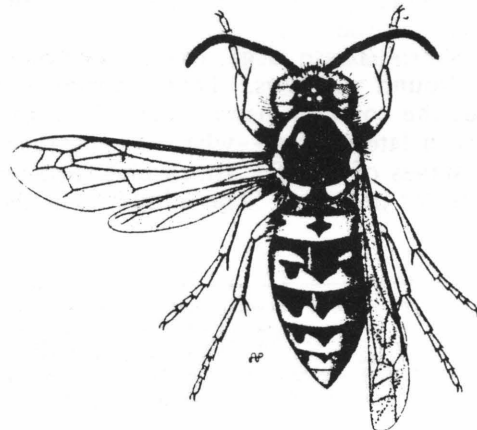


Foreign grain beetle - This very small (1/16 inch), brown beetle with the small, clubbed antennae, is a common pest in late summer. Homeowners often find large numbers of these beetles in houses at windows, associated with lumber stacked outdoors, and frequently in new houses. There is little known about the life cycle and habits of this beetle. Apparently, the adults are attracted to molded flour and grain, there is no data available on the habits of the larvae. The pest status of this beetle is based primarily on the presence of adults--not from damage or continued infestations. Control is usually not necessary, and applying chemicals would be ineffective.



Yellowjackets - The nests of yellowjackets reach their maximum size in late summer--some with more than 200 individuals by this time. Late summer bring out some of the worst behavior of these insects. They begin to frequent trash cans and picnic searching for sugar solutions.

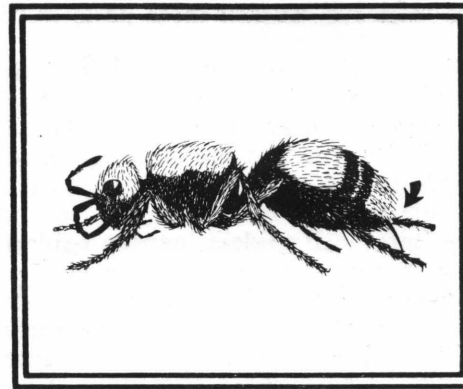
This behavior brings them in contact with people--and that can lead to stings! The nests of ground-nesting yellowjackets can be eliminated by mixing up a gallon or more of common garden insecticide (Sevin 1% will do nicely), and



pouring this liquid on/over the nest opening. Do this late in the day--after dark if possible--to get most of the yellowjackets back at the nest (early in the morning is also a good time). The above ground nests can be eliminated by purchasing a special aerosol can that can direct a strong spray at the nest and penetrate the paper covering. Evening is also a good time for this method.

Velvet ants - These moderate-sized (1/2 inch), black and red insects resemble ants (so are called "ants"), but are closely related to wasps. The long hairs on their body gives them a velvety appearance. These insects can inflict a nasty sting--but are not likely to attack. They will sting if handled, however.

Velvet ants are parasitic on other wasps and bees. The female velvet ant invades a nest of wasps or bumble bee and lays eggs in the cells of the host. The larvae of velvet ants that develop from these eggs kill and eat the larvae of the other wasps in the nest. It's tough out there!



Breeding, Structural & Behavior Characteristics Of Ten Common Flies			
Common Name	Breeding Area	Structural	Behavioral
Blow or bottle flies, Green or blue bottle	Rotting meat; dead carcasses (ie: bird, squirrel, rat).	Usually a shiny abdomen.	Strong flyers, rests on dead meat or in the sun.
Drain fly, sewer gnat, moth fly	Drains, rotting mops, wet rotting areas.	Fuzzy wings, small.	Weak flyer, close to wet decaying areas.
Fruit flies, pomace or vinegar flies	Fermenting material including fruit, alcohol, vinegar.	Red eyes, fragile.	Weak flyer, in clusters around food.
Phorid flies	Decaying human bodies, wet soil (even potted plant), under air conditioners, wet area such as rotting baseboards.	Small, fragile.	Annoys people, does not bite.
Houseflies	Garbage, rotting mops, grease traps, crushed food behind peeling baseboards.	Yellow underside of abdomen.	Lands on people, ceilings. Leaves black specs in room, usually within 100 feet of breeding area.
Flesh flies	Fresh dog dung.	Large red eyes, black stripes on thorax.	Lands on fresh dog dung.
Face flies	Fresh cow manure. (The adults overwinter in structures.)	Similar to house fly.	Flies to lights, often in attic.
Cluster flies	Living earthworm. The adults overwinter in structures.	Similar to fuzzy house fly, wings overlap when at rest.	Attracted to bright lights, often dead in light fixtures. Does not land on people.
Mosquitoes (Yes, they are flies, too.)	Tin cans, rubber tires, bird bath and other stagnating water sources.	Fragile, skinny legs, scales on fragile wings.	Bite, rest on walls, often hum while flying.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN SEPTEMBER

The hot days of August and early September will bring out several species of insects that are common household pests. Some of these include:

Yellow ants - These brownish yellow ants usually swarm in the late summer and early fall. They nest outdoors under patios, walks, and adjacent to house foundations. Look for the nests and apply a liquid garden insecticide (diazinon, Sevin, Dursban, etc.)

Ticks - The American dog tick and the brown dog tick can re-emerge as pests in the late summer and fall. Pets (dogs and cats) and people can be "attacked" by hundreds of "seed ticks". This is the first-stage nymph of ticks; very small and can occur in large numbers. Aerosol sprays can kill these pests in the house.

Fruit flies - These small, red-eyed flies are attracted to the smell of fruit--bananas, tomatoes, grapes--and can occur in large numbers. Tomato canning time seems to bring them out in great numbers! There is little that can be sprayed to control these beasts. Good screens and the elimination of ageing fruit in the house is the best sanitation method.

Spiders - Large orb spiders, garden spiders, and wolf spiders become a little more active in the late summer. Their nests are visible in the morning when they hold the dew; they often build nests close to lights that burn at night. The only dangerous spiders in Virginia are the black widow and the brown recluse--and neither of these produce webs in open areas. Aerosol sprays can eliminate unwanted spiders close to the house.

Horsehair worms - They usually show up in the outdoor waterdish of the pet dog or cat, or sometimes inside the house. These long, thin worms are internal parasites of crickets and grasshoppers that emerge from their host insect in the fall--especially after a rain (or when the cricket falls into the waterdish!). They are not parasites of the pet--no need to worry or for control measures.

Millipedes - These critters, related to insects, are common pests throughout the spring and summer, and are often numerous in the fall. They are most often encountered where there are accumulations of organic matter--such as dead leaves and grass clippings. They can migrate in large numbers and cause quite a nuisance. Dursban and diazinon can be sprayed to control them.

Soldier beetle larvae - These brownish-black grubs also migrate in large numbers in the fall. They move from turfgrass areas to patios, sidewalks, carports, and into the house if they get a chance! They will not infest the house. Control can be obtained with common garden insecticides, such as Sevin, diazinon, and Dursban.

SAIL ON SILVER GIRL...

After six years of dedicated service, boundless computer skills, patience with professors that wait for the last minute, and a system that didn't pay her enough--Phoebe Peterson, the Extension Entomology Secretary, will leave Va Tech on August 9th. Sail on silver girl...

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