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VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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VIRGINIA
STATE

No. 147

December 10, 1985

CLUSTER FLIES

This has been a very good year for cluster flies! Apparently the summer rains and warm temperatures have been beneficial to the earthworm population-- and that provided plenty of food for the cluster fly larvae. You are likely to receive calls this winter and spring about controlling these pests. Here's some information that will help answer the questions:

Description and Life History

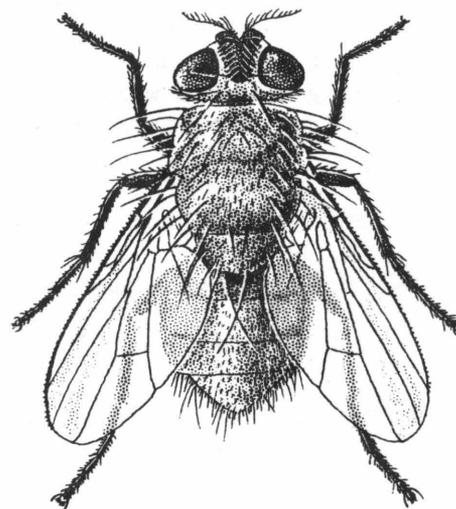
The cluster fly is slightly larger than the common house fly. There are no distinct lines or stripes behind the head, and the abdomen has irregular light and dark gray areas. Cluster flies are parasitic on certain earthworms. The female lays eggs in the soil near the burrows of earthworms. The tiny maggots that hatch from the eggs seek out earthworms to feed upon. The maggots of cluster flies have never been reared on any other food but living earthworms. When full grown, the parasitic maggot leaves the body of the host and enters the soil. There are about 4 generations a year.

Invading Homes

Adult flies of the last generation of the year become numerous during the latter days of September to mid-October. As cold weather progresses, adults seek protected places to spend the winter. In many cases, this is within walls, attics, storage rooms, and basements of homes. Screens offer no protection since these flies prefer to crawl in through small openings elsewhere around the building. For this reason they are extremely difficult to keep out of homes. Isolated homes in the country are especially prone to invasion, since they offer the only warm shelter for miles around.



INSECT NOTES



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Control

Complete control of cluster flies is almost impossible, since the over-wintering adults are concealed in walls, attics, etc. When possible, cover the louver to the attic with screen, and use a caulking compound to seal openings to the outside. Adults are sluggish enough in the winter to be picked up with a vacuum cleaner.

It is probably not practical to attempt to control the host of cluster flies -- earthworms in the ground around the house. Earthworms are important to soil, and cluster flies would simply come from surrounding areas. Chemical control should be concentrated in the home where the adults hibernate. An easy method of chemical control is to use dichlorvos strips (Vapona) in the attic, storage closets, etc. Do not apply in bedrooms or in wallpapered or other well-finished rooms.

When using the strips or the spray, it may be more effective to concentrate the chemical on the sunny side of the house. These walls are the warmer and generally attract more flies.

Adults that buzz about the house can be killed with an aerosol spray of pyrethrins. Pyrethrins are "quick kill" insecticides and have little or no residual action.

Prevention of cluster fly infestations is very difficult, but certainly warrants a try. Timing is the most important factor. Applying a synthetic pyrethroid (permethrin is an example) to the outside of the structure with an electric fogging machine will help treat all entry sites. Application should be made in the first two weeks of August.--Robinson

INSECT NOTES QUIZE -- 1985:

The most common household flea is the dog flea. ___T ___F

Springtails frequently infest the dry soil of houseplants. ___T ___F

A swarm of termites in a house usually indicates that the house has been infested for 2 to 4 years. ___T ___F

Carpenter Ants infest and can eat a variety of kinds of wood, not just pine. ___T ___F

Crane Flies look like mosquitoes, but they do not bite. ___T ___F

The American dog tick has white and brown markings and can spread Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. ___T ___F

Earwigs are serious pests because they often bite and/or pinch people. ___T ___F

Ground beetles do not infest houses, but are attracted to lights. ___T ___F

Longhorned Beetles can not leave firewood and infest structural wood. ___T ___F

Torpedo and Dagnet are new insecticides for termite control. ___T ___F

Match the items in the two columns:

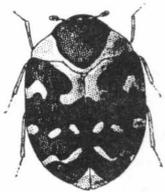
A.

- ___ Dursban TC
- ___ Carpenter Ant
- ___ Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever
- ___ Angoumois grain moth
- ___ Drain Fly
- ___ Foreign grain beetle
- ___ Precor
- ___ Old House Borer
- ___ Cythion
- ___ Springtails

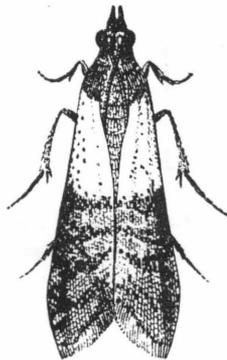
B.

- 1. ___ Lone star tick
- 2. ___ Indian corn
- 3. ___ Polluted water
- 4. ___ "New House" pest
- 5. ___ Moisture-damaged wood
- 6. ___ Termiticide
- 7. ___ Flea control
- 8. ___ Structural wood
- 9. ___ Malathion
- 10. ___ House Plants

Can you identify these insects?



1 _____



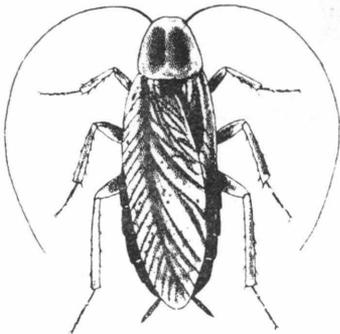
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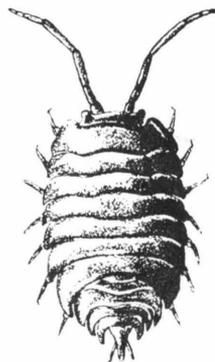
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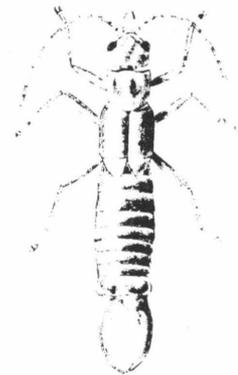
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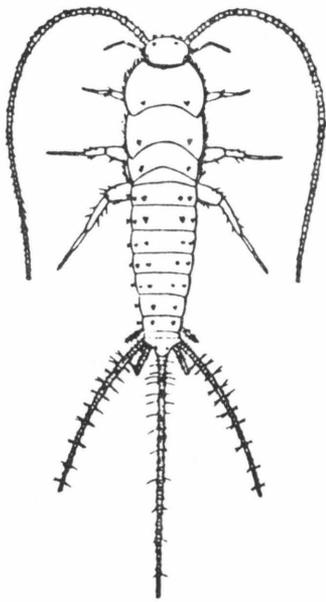
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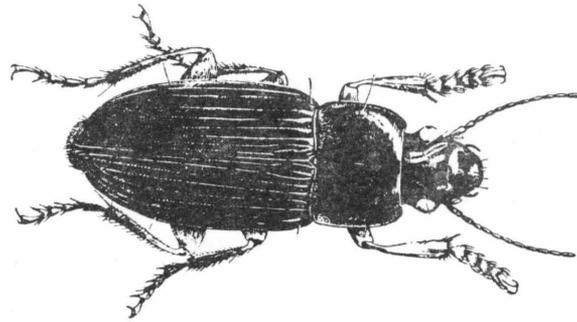
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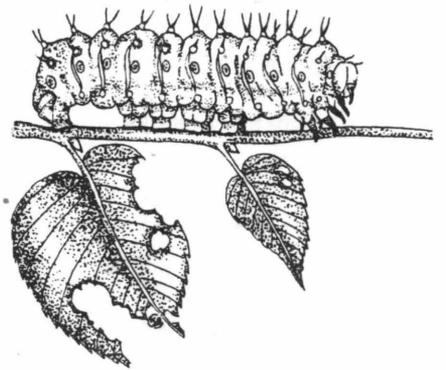
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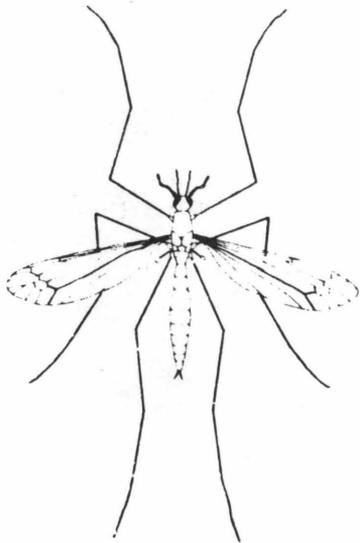
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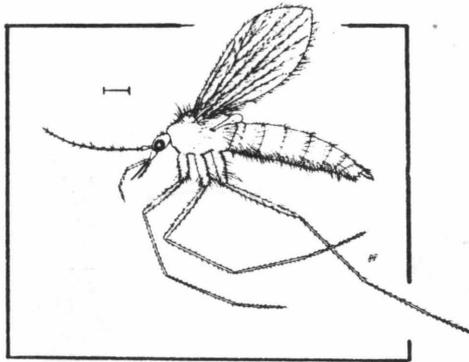
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12 _____



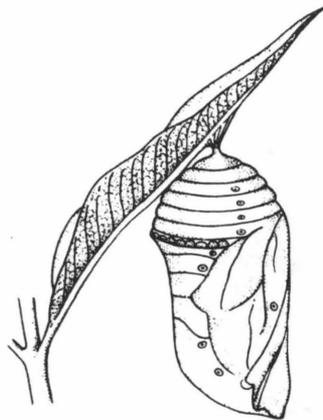
10 _____



11 _____



14 _____



13 _____