

# Dairy Details

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NORTHERN VALLEY DAIRY PRODUCTION MEDICINE CENTER

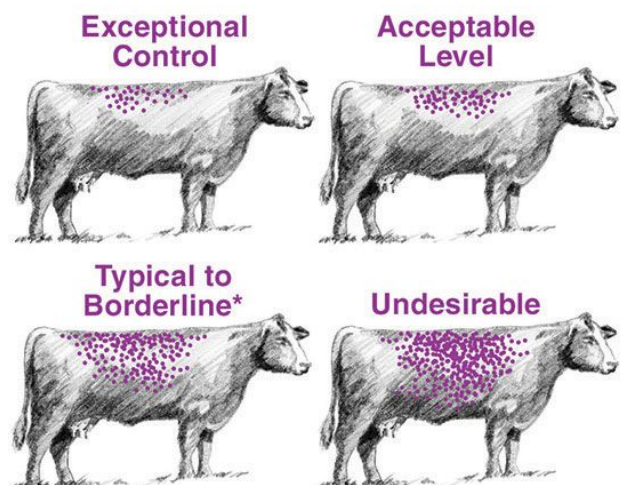
## Are Flies Pestering Your Bottomline?

Flies are just part of the livestock experience package! It's impossible to eliminate flies, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't take advantage of all the tools we now have at our disposal to lessen their negative impact.

Flies are more than just a nuisance; they cause serious economic losses for both dairy and beef producers. Horn flies are the biggest pests for cattle on pasture, while stable and house flies are more prevalent in confinement barns, especially in free stall and open front barns. It's estimated that horn flies cost North American cattle producers \$1 billion annually. Their feeding causes irritation, blood loss, decreased feed efficacy and weight gains, decreased milk production, and they spread diseases and cause mastitis in cows and heifers. A Nebraska study showed that calf weaning weights were 10-20 pounds higher when horn flies were controlled on mother cows. The economic injury level for horn flies is 200 flies per animal. When the animal has 200 or more horn flies on them, they become less profitable.

And don't think that fly control is only important if you have cattle on pasture. Dairy cows in confinement barns also experience stress from high volumes of flies if a fly control program is not in place.

With high fly volume, cows will spend more time stamping off flies, they will bunch together in groups and will spend less time lying down. All these things will affect their milk production. Flies are also effective disease spreaders, known to transmit bovine leukosis virus, anaplasmosis and staph aureus mastitis.



\*100-200 horn flies per head is the economical threshold for treatment.

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So what steps can you take to keep flies from biting into your profits? Below is a multi-pronged approach to cattle fly control.

- **Feed through larvicide or insect growth regulator:** These include products such as Clarifly and Altosid. These products affect the flies' breeding cycle and prevents them from reproducing. Typically, you want to start feeding these products ~30 days before flies typically emerge and continue them until ~30 days after a killing frost.
- **Fly tags:** Fly tags not only protect the face from flies, but the animals whole body since they will rub the tags on their pen mates. Our practice has found them very helpful, especially in herds that have experienced high incidence of pink eye in the past. Ideally these tags are put in middle to late June, so their efficacy doesn't run out by the end of summer. Be sure to remove the tags in 3-5 months or when cattle are moved off pasture to prevent the release of small amounts of insecticide that lead to resistance. It's also important that producers rotate through the different insecticides (such as pyrethroids and organophosphates) from year to year to prevent resistance. If you put fly tags in your milking cows, be sure the product has a lactating cattle label.
- **Pour-ons:** We recommend applying pour-ons at the same time you put in fly tags. If it is Spring turn out time, use a pour-on that also kills internal parasites. Later in the summer, stick to products labeled just for flies to reduce the development of resistance. Again, check the label for appropriate products to use on lactating cattle.
- **Dust bags/cattle rubs:** These practices are fairly cheap and easy to implement. Bags/rubs must be placed in an area where all cattle have no choice but to use, such as at the entrance to a water tank.

- **Premise Sprays:** Regular spraying of the barns, inside and out, throughout the fly season will decrease fly nuisance problems and improve the environment for both humans and cattle. You have many options in our area to hire an experienced company to spray your farm monthly.
- **Sanitation:** Pesticides alone can't be expected to decrease fly populations if sanitation practices are poor. This includes not only proper manure management and disposal, but also elimination of any moist, decaying matter such as spilled feed, silage, rotting hay, etc. According to an article from Progressive Dairyman, 90% of a dairy's flies will develop in less than 10% of the farm's physical area. So, cleaning up these areas will greatly decrease fly production on a dairy farm.
- **Fly Predators:** If coupled with some of these other strategies, parasitic wasps (tiny non-stinging wasps) can be a great addition to a fly control program. They must be released on a regular basis to be effective.

Implementing a solid fly control program can be a relative low investment high reward decision for any cattle farm. It will improve both human and cattle welfare, increase productivity (again this can be applied to humans and cattle), and decrease the risk of disease spread.

### Boehringer Ingelheim July Rebate Program

Through July if you spend \$750 on select BI products you will receive a 5% rebate. Select products include: Bovicalc, Eprinex, Express, J-Vac, Lockout, PolyMast, Synchsure, Today, and Tomorrow. Contact our office if you have any questions!



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