



*From the desk of Dr. Leon Roggenbuck*

*June 1, 2020*

As I write this it is warm and sunny, the crops are coming out of the ground everywhere and milk futures are up. While the warmer weather is certainly welcome it does bring with it one of my least favorite things... FLIES!!

On our typical confinement dairy farms there are two primary kinds of flies: Stable flies and House flies. The stable flies are most certainly the ones that bother your cows the most. They are the ankle biters. The most recent study I could find estimated the economic impact to the dairy and beef industries to be 2.2 billion dollars. That is pennies to a Washington politician but to you and I it's a lot of money! I can't tell you how much of that loss came from your dairy farm, but, if the cows are bunching and stomping you are losing your share. Take a moment and study the ankles of these cows. You may not see many flies at a glance but one or two per cow is enough to make trouble. They cost you money and they make your cows miserable because they constantly bite at their ankles and it hurts! As you know, miserable cows have a way of making life tough for us too. I get kicked and ran over more in August and September than the rest of the year combined. It is important to realize that your Premise spray will not control Stable flies because they spend all their time on the cow.

Controlling Stable flies is a two-prong approach. Topical permethrins (ultra boss, Exit Gold and several others come to mind) to kill adults and larvicides in the manure and bedding before they mature. Keep in mind the topicals need to hit the ankles of your cows to effectively kill stable flies. Simply pouring it on the back as directed is not good enough. ClariFly is a larvicide growth regulator that can be added to feed and milk replacer. It is very affordable and works extremely well on pasture animals. It is somewhat defeated in confinement housing because the larvae can grow in bedding materials. Especially around the edges of pens and around feed bunks. Anywhere there is organic material and moisture. If you can't clean it with a skid steer you should spray it with a larvicide according to Dr. Rick Hack, an entomologist with Elanco. Neporex is a product made by Elanco that can be sprayed in these areas to control Stable flies. House flies lay their eggs in some of these same places but especially anywhere that has moisture and waste feed. Under the calf buckets and in front of the calf hutches is another example of a good spot to spray. Using Neporex around these areas every three weeks, combined with Clarify, would be an excellent combo.

Now let's talk about those disgusting clouds of house flies. While they do not bite painfully, they do physically carry pathogens from animal to animal. Pinkeye and Salmonella are just a couple that come to mind. They constantly fly from dirty surfaces to potentially clean surfaces and spread their filth. Every time they land somewhere, they vomit, suck up their vomit and poop. Puke, suck, poop...puke, suck, poop...all day long. Do we need any more reason to kill them? Commercial pest control people target house flies with Premise sprays. While we wholeheartedly support the use of these, folks, I have to tell you that Elanco has a product called Agita that sounds downright fun to use. It is a spot spray that has an attractant in it. You spray a spot every 6-8 feet along a wall (or on the outside of a hutch). The flies are attracted to it and then puke, suck and poop for the last time because it kills them FAST! It lasts 2-3 weeks on the outside of calf hutches and costs about 3 cents per hutch. It lasts 4-6 weeks inside out of the rain and sun. Just remember to keep it out of the reach of animals. As a Neonicotinoid pesticide it has a lot of selective toxicity toward insects, but it is prudent to keep it out of reach and use common sense precautions when spraying. And finally, don't forget to clean the blades and especially the cages around your fans. A 7 mph wind across the backs of your cows does help to disperse the flies and cool your cows.

May you and your cows have a blessed summer!



