

OSU EXTENSION NEWS

# Integrated fly control for cow/calf operations

**A**s we move into spring time and cattle producers start planning their herd health program, now is a good time to start thinking about season long fly control.

The flies that most producers are concerned about are the “blood Sucking flies” which includes horn flies, stable flies, horse and deer flies. For this article we will focus on the horn fly as it is the external parasite that causes the biggest economic losses in the cattle industry.

The horn fly is the small fly that tends to feed on the underline or on the sides of cattle. It is the fly that feeds in an inverted (head pointing toward the ground) position. Horn flies spend their entire life resting and feeding on cattle, although the females leave cattle occasionally to lay eggs. Horn flies are a greater problem in pastured cattle because they require a



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fresh, intact manure pad to complete their lifecycle. The lifecycle development from egg to adult fly requires about two weeks. Because the horn fly spends all of its adult life on cattle, control with insecticides and insecticide products (fly tags) can be highly effective.

Here are a few guidelines for controlling horn flies:

- Begin horn fly control procedures in the spring when cattle average approximately 200 horn flies.
- If ear tags are used, the insecticide classes must be rotated. Do not use a pyrethroid ear tag more than ev-

ery three years. Do not use an organophosphate ear tag more than two years in succession. Continuous use of ear tags in the same insecticide class will eventually result in horn fly resistance.

- Remove ear tags at the end of fly season or when they lose their effectiveness. Do not tag cattle more than once per fly season, regardless of insecticide class.

- If additional fly control is needed, use sprays, pour-ons, dusts or backrubbers. If possible alternate insecticide classes when changing control methods.

- Tag heifers, cows and weaned calves. Do not tag bulls or calves still on their mothers.

The ideal rotation of ear tags for horn fly control: Organophosphate - Pyrethroid - Abamectin.

For more information on fly control in cattle contact your local OSU Extension Office.