



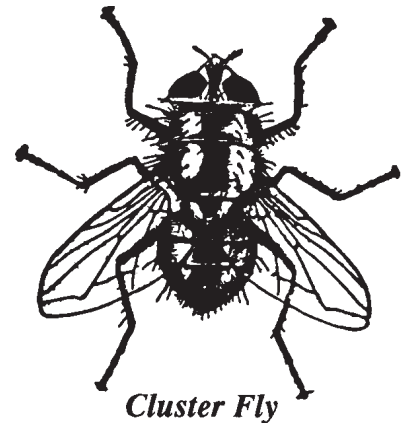
Urban Integrated Pest Management

Cluster Flies

Insect
Fact Sheet **4**

Introduction

The large sluggish flies known as cluster, or “attic,” flies often invade New Hampshire homes in the fall to become annoying wintertime pests. They are particularly noticeable on warm days when they become active and find their way into our living quarters. Just when you think you have them under control, more will appear the next day, creating the impression they are breeding inside the house. In reality, they are only using your home as a place to spend the winter and do not cause damage to the building, furnishings or occupants.



Cluster Fly

Description and life cycle

To the layperson, cluster flies have no obvious characteristics that distinguish them from ordinary house flies. During the summer, cluster flies are active outdoors, where they are parasitic on earthworms. Adult females lay their eggs near the openings of earthworm burrows. Upon hatching, the young larvae move into the burrows and penetrate the earthworms' bodies. After feeding on the worms, the fly larvae pupate in the soil. The adults emerge to repeat the cycle, with up to four generations being produced each summer.

The adults from the last generation in the fall seek protected areas in which to spend the winter. They invade attics, get under siding and around windows and into crevices on the outside of buildings. Many will eventually congregate between the walls and may work their way into a room through openings in the window frames and electrical fixtures.

Cluster flies are usually sluggish and make little attempt to escape, so they can easily be picked up with a vacuum cleaner. On warm days in early spring they move outdoors and are often seen covering the sunny side of a house.

Control

Prevention and non-chemical control

The best line of defense against cluster flies is to prevent their entrance into the building. However, with some of our older, wooden rural structures this is virtually impossible. Where possible, seal up cracks in the siding and around windows with the caulking compound and cover attic vents with wire screening.

Chemical control

Some pesticides applied to the outside of buildings during the first or second week in August, have residual effects that will prevent cluster flies from entering the living space.

Stray flies that emerge into living quarters can be killed with household fly sprays around window frames and door openings. When using a vacuum cleaner to clear up the sluggish flies, you may need to remove the bag and place it outdoors, or the flies inside may just crawl back out.

Consult your county Extension Educator (see county office telephone listing below) for specific pesticide recommendations.

UNH Cooperative Extension County Office Telephone Numbers				
Belknap (603)527-5475	Carroll (603)539-3331	Cheshire (603)352-4550	Coos (603)788-4961	Grafton (603)787-6944
Hillsborough Goffstown (603)641-6060	Merrimack (603)796-2151	Rockingham Brentwood, NH 03833 (603)679-5616	Strafford (603)749-4445	Sullivan (603)863-9200

Stop! It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. If unsure of registration status of a particular pesticide product, contact the NH Division of Pesticide Control at (603) 271-3550. Store pesticides in their original containers in a locked cabinet or shed away from food. Dispose of unused pesticides or empty containers safely, according to NH regulations. If you suspect pesticide poisoning, call the New Hampshire Poison Control Center at 1-800-562-8236.



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