

## Annoying Flies Move Indoors in Autumn

Every fall, large, sluggish flies buzz at windows, around your face, and knock into lampshades. These irritating insects are probably house flies. The house fly, is a well-known cosmopolitan pest of both farm and home. This species is always found in association with humans or activities of humans. Not only are they a nuisance, but they also can transport disease-causing organisms.



More than 100 pathogens associated with the house fly may cause disease in humans and animals, including typhoid, cholera, bacillary dysentery, tuberculosis, anthrax ophthalmia and infantile diarrhea, as well as parasitic worms. Pathogenic organisms are picked up by flies from garbage, sewage and other sources of filth, and then transferred on their mouthparts and other body parts, through their vomitus, feces and contaminated external body parts to human and animal food.

Adults usually live 15 to 25 days. The potential reproductive capacity of flies is tremendous, but fortunately can never be realized. It has been stated that a pair of flies beginning operations in April may be progenitors, if all were to live, of 191,010,000,000,000,000, flies by August.

Adults suck liquids containing sweet or decaying substances. Larvae feed on moist food rich in organic matter. Although they are attracted to a variety of food material, house flies have mouth parts which allow them to ingest only liquid materials. Solid materials are liquified by means of regurgitated saliva.

The flies are inactive at night, with ceilings, beams and overhead wires within buildings, trees, and shrubs, various kinds of outdoor wires, and grasses reported as overnight resting sites. Killing adult flies may reduce the infestation, but elimination of breeding areas is necessary for good management. Garbage cans and dumpsters should have tight-fitting lids and be cleaned regularly. Dry garbage and trash should be placed in plastic garbage bags and sealed up. All garbage receptacles should be located as far from building entrances as possible.

In the fall, the adult flies seek shelter to spend the winter months. They gather near windows in outbuildings and homes, spinning around and buzzing noisily. When swatted, they tend to leave a greasy spot. As the sun sets and temperatures cool, flies crawl into buildings via cracks and gaps including those around eaves, around sash-cords, windowsills, baseboards and under loose-fitting vinyl or aluminum siding. The best course of action for fly control is to prevent their entry indoors by sealing around cracks, windows and doors and repairing screens. Don't forget to seal around electrical outlets, switchboxes and vents, especially on the south side of the buildings, where these flies most commonly enter.

For temporary indoor relief, use a vacuum cleaner to remove dead, dying or sluggish flies. Old-fashioned methods work well also – flypaper, a fly swatter or folded newspaper will dispatch individuals.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact the Farm Advisor's office at [cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu) or 754-6477 with your agricultural questions. Talk to a certified Master Gardener every Wednesday, 10:00-12:00, 754-2880. To speak with a Master Gardener in Tuolumne County, please call 209 533-5696.