

Fly Control Strategies for Horse Barns



From horse flies, stable flies, mosquitoes, and more, flying insects have been pestering horses and humans for thousands of years. These winged warriors can interrupt peaceful pasture time for your horse and also detract from your ability to enjoy time around the barn. Beyond the sheer annoyance flies can cause, they can also transmit a variety of diseases. While it may be impossible to create a fly-free barn for you and your horse, there are simple steps that you can take to help reduce the number of irritating insects that call your barn home sweet home.

Manure management

Keep your stalls clean and dry by removing manure and any wet bedding each day. Besides reducing fly attracting odors, regularly cleaning and replacing stall bedding eliminates the warm moist environment that flies prefer for laying eggs – helping to reduce the overall fly population. Many types of flies also feed on manure, so removing this food source can go a long way in helping to deter flies from your barn. In addition to keeping stalls clean and dry, regularly removing manure from the pasture will also help to eliminate the prime breeding and food source for many flying insects.

The less manure there is on your property, the fewer flies you will have. While moving manure to an offsite location is ideal, it may not always be possible. If you have large open fields, consider spreading manure in thin layers over your fields with a manure spreader. The manure can help to fertilize fields and also help keep manure piles to a minimum. If you don't have larger acreage, you can simply rake or drag your pastures to spread out existing manure. Spreading or raking manure helps dry it out and greatly reduces the preferred environment for egg laying flies. If you use a manure composting pile, make sure to pile it up rather than out and cover it whenever possible. The increased heat from piling it upward and covering it can help make it too hot for flies to lay eggs.

Fly parasites

In addition to proactive manure management practices, consider using fly parasites. Fly parasites are tiny burrowing insects that are a natural enemy of a wide variety of nuisance flies. Fly parasites do not bite or sting humans or animals and are adaptable to many climates. Sprinkle fly parasites along fence lines in pastures, on manure piles, around wet areas, and anywhere else where manure or rotting vegetation can be found as these are the places that nuisance flies will lay their eggs. The fly parasites stay close to where you place them and work by killing flies in the maggot and pupa stages of the life cycle.

Feed through products

Feed-through fly-control products are given directly to the horse in their feed. These products contain insect growth regulators that help eliminate flies in manure by keeping fly eggs from hatching. While the regulator is bad for flies, it won't harm your horse. For the most effective results, all horses in the barn should be on the feed-through fly-control program. Just like fly parasites, feed through products work to help reduce fly reproduction but do not affect existing adult flies.

Fly traps and tapes

To catch adult flies outside of your barn, consider using fly traps that lure flies into them. There are two types of traps - those that attract flies visually (best for biting stable flies) and those that attract flies by odor (best for house flies). Traps should be hung in outside locations that are not near your barn as you want to lure flies away from the barn and your horses. Hang the traps at least four feet above the ground and follow the manufacturer's directions for placement. You may also want to experiment by moving traps to different areas on your property to see where you'll get the best results. To catch flies that have made their way inside your barn, consider hanging strips of fly tape from higher locations like ceilings in the aisle or rafters above stalls. The sticky tape will trap adult flies when they land and can help reduce the number of flies available for breeding.

Premise sprays

To combat adult flies inside the barn, consider using a premise spray. Premise sprays can offer quick knockdown of flies and other insects that are already in the barn and also help deter new ones from entering. Premise sprays can come in many different forms. For larger facilities and areas with heavy insect activity, you may want to consider installing a premise spray system. These systems use a

reservoir and a system of tubing and misting heads to release a controlled amount of fly insecticide on regular intervals. There are also battery operated premise spray units that use individual canisters of fly insecticide to release a controlled amount of fly insecticide on regular intervals. Most premise spray systems are mounted in higher locations in your barn such as rafters and above doorways, but always make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation and use. You'll have to remember to refill the system regularly, and check any batteries being used, in order to get the best results as well. It's also important to keep in mind that the insecticide in premise spray systems may also kill any fly parasites you have released around your barn.

In addition to full systems, you can also apply a premise spray to targeted areas of your barn to kill and repel flies. Many fly sprays can perform "double-duty" as a premise spray, but make sure to check the label and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use. When using a premise spray, you'll want to concentrate around the outside of doors and windows to discourage insects from coming inside - essentially you're hanging out the "no flies welcome" mat for your barn. If you notice an area where flies seem to gather, spray those areas as well to discourage flies from settling there. Many sprays will also kill on contact helping you eliminate adult flies where you find them.

Fly Sprays

To quickly and easily combat adult flies and provide fast-acting protection for your horse, make sure you have fly spray on hand. There are a number of fly sprays available that can provide quick knockdown of flies and give your horse relief from these irritating insects. Applying fly spray to your horse before you ride or work them can also help your horse focus more on you instead of being distracted by swarming insects and painful fly bites. Read labels carefully and look for sprays that will meet your specific needs. There are sprays that kill and repel a wide variety of insects to ones that are more species specific. There are also different fly spray formulas including sprays made using natural ingredients, as well as options that are sweat resistant. Choose the option that best fits your specific situation and follow the instructions on the fly spray label for proper application. Be careful when applying fly spray as some horses may be afraid of the noise that the sprayer makes. Go slowly and allow the horse time to get used to the noise and sensation of being sprayed. Do not spray horses around the face as you do not want to get fly spray in their eyes. Instead, spray a cloth with fly spray and then carefully wipe it on your horse's ears and on his face being careful to avoid the areas directly around their eyes. There are also fly gels and ointments available for use on these sensitive areas of your horse and can provide more targeted application.

Fly mask and sheets

A great option for providing protection from flies for your horse's face and ears is by using a fly mask. There are a variety of sizes, fits, and materials to choose from when it comes to fly masks. There are options for ear coverage, no ear coverage, and also options that extend further down a horse's nose. You may need to experiment with fit and styles to see which work best for your horse's shape and needs. In addition to fly masks, fly sheets and leg wraps are also available and provide a physical barrier from flies on your horse. Again, there are many different sizes, fits, and materials to choose from when it comes to fly sheets and leg wraps and so you'll want to find the option that best fits your needs. Fly masks, sheets, and leg wraps should be regularly checked to make sure that they are fitting correctly (not causing any rubs or soreness) and are in good condition (not fraying or having areas that might get caught on objects such as stalls and fences). Check the labels on these items and consider washing them on a regular basis to keep them clean and free of dirt and debris as well.

Fans

Ceiling and portable fans are also a great way to deter flies inside your barn. The circulating air makes it difficult for the flies to make their way around the barn. A fan angled to blow air over your horse will make it even harder for flies to land on your horse as well. It is very important to make sure that you use fans and power cords that are specifically designed for agricultural use to reduce the risk of fire.

Housekeeping

Whether it's dropped grain around the feed tub or uneaten supplements and medications, these leftovers can attract flies inside your barn as they look for an easy meal. Empty and scrub feed tubs

regularly to remove any material left behind by your horse. The same should be done with water buckets, especially for horses that like to dunk their hay or drop grain into their water buckets.

Make sure all garbage cans inside and around your barn have tight fitting lids to prevent flies from accessing the trash as a food source. Regularly remove garbage from inside of the barn, especially any garbage that contains food, and scrub and disinfect garbage cans periodically to remove any stuck on residue.

Using these tips can help you greatly reduce the nuisance fly population around your barn and make time spent outdoors in the nice weather more enjoyable for you and your horse.