

# Cluster Flies

## Advice leaflet about Cluster Flies

These flies are commonly found throughout Europe and the UK the name refers to their habit of clustering together in large numbers and hibernating in buildings. There are several species found in the UK but they are often found in mixed swarms. The sizes vary between species from 3 to 8 mm, but the commonest species are 3 to 4mm long.

### Life Cycle

Eggs are laid on damp soil or beneath dead and rotting leaves. The larvae of one species seek earthworms and bore through the body wall and are therefore more common in the country. When the earthworm dies the larvae bore out again and pupate in the soil. The adult flies feed on the nectar of garden and wild flowers. As a free-living insect the length of the life cycle is weather dependent. In Britain two generations are common, but in hot summers up to four are possible. During the summer and early autumn cluster flies are of no importance. As the season cools they seek shelter in nooks and crannies in houses and other buildings. When the temperature drops further they will seek greater protection and often form very large clusters in lofts or roof spaces. Often nuisance is caused by the presence of these large clusters outside buildings while they try to find a way in to hibernate. These masses may consist of several thousand flies clustered together. These large clusters produce a sickly smell. If the flies are warmed up during their hibernation they may emerge rather lazily and be a source of nuisance within the building.

It has been observed that a single building in a row of apparently identical buildings will be selected for clustering year after year. This is no indication of poor hygiene standards and no explanation for the phenomenon has been found.

### Control Methods

Control of these insects is at best difficult. Ideally one would wish to prevent them entering the building, but this is rarely possible. Fly proofing a building is not 100% effective. However, caulking around windows, and sealing obvious entry points can help.

When the insects are inside control can be achieved by a combination of physical and chemical methods.

If your premises have been used for hibernation before, hanging insecticidal strips in the loft or attic may be helpful in reducing the numbers of flies.

If the cluster is accessible a vacuum cleaner can be used to collect them, and the vacuum bag can then be disposed of sealed inside a plastic bag.

Aerosol fly killers will deal effectively with small clusters, but larger ones may need to be treated by a pest control contractor. However, it must be borne in mind that even treatment by a pest control contractor may not be 100% effective. The insecticide used may not kill those flies that are already hibernating at the time of the treatment, and as the area warms up they will emerge.

## **Local Authority Service**

If you do not wish to try to deal with an infestation yourself, the Environmental Health Department does offer a service, although there is a charge for this. If you would like a Pest Control Officer to visit to treat the infestation, please telephone the department on **01799 510370** to make an appointment. A fixed standard charge is made to cover this service. Also should the initial treatment be unsuccessful within two weeks one further treatment will be carried out to at no extra cost.

**We accept the following credit/debit cards: VISA, VISA DELTA, MASTERCARD, SWITCH. Please have your details ready when requesting an appointment.**

All products used by the Council are approved for use on domestic and commercial premises under the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. Alternatively, there are a number of private pest control companies that will also do this work, and you can find more details from the local telephone directory.