

Stable Flies Can Decrease Weight Of Cattle And Producers Profits

MT. VERNON, MO.

There is plenty of research regarding the economic impact of flies on cattle. "The loss is always in the hundreds of million dollars range which is hard to comprehend," said Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

The biggest fly threat and dollar loss comes from the horn flies, followed by face fly, horse fly and the stable fly. Each of these flies irritate cattle in different ways such as sucking blood, transmitting disease and being a nuisance when cattle are grazing.

"The stable fly probably gets the least attention. However, they do suck blood and when present in even small numbers, as few as 5, they seem to drive cattle crazy," said Cole.

A University of Nebraska study measured nearly a one-half pound a day decline in steer weight gains when stable flies were not controlled.

The Nebraska trial used a three-time a week insecticidal spray treatment to control the stable flies. Cole says this frequency of treatment would not be practical under most pasture management systems.

"The usually reliable horn fly control methods do not work on stable flies. Dust bags, ear tags and pour-ons do not reach the lower portion of the cattle's body where the stable flies feed. The oral larvacides do not control their breeding habits as they use old manure, straw and bedding for those purposes," said Cole.

Kansas State studies have shown that an important egg laying area for stable flies is around big bale rings. Moving the rings regularly and not overfeeding can reduce the hay-manure buildup where the stable flies multiply.

"Observe your cattle regularly and if stable flies are suspected, take steps to reduce your cattle's discomfort and improve your profit margin," said Cole. Δ