

Flies are a real pest to our horses, particularly during those warmer Summer months. Flies can cause a number of unwanted problems for our horses including skin irritation, allergic reactions, bites, sore eyes, while also being responsible for transmitting some diseases.

A few common problems as a result of flies / insects are:

Sweet itch - Sweet itch is a condition caused by a reaction to the saliva of biting midges and usually occurs during the months from April to early November. It causes horses to become intensely pruritic (itchy) resulting in them rubbing their manes, tails and sometimes, but much less commonly, their undersides. There is no cure for sweet itch. It can only be managed, and once a horse has it, they have it for life.

Sore eyes - swarming flies around the eyes can cause them to run, the horses to rub and can cause huge irritation and in some cases trauma to the eye. This in turn can lead to more serious eye conditions.

Bites - Biting flies such as horseflies and midges can be very uncomfortable for the horse. These bites are not only painful but can become swollen and irritated in some cases, require veterinary attention.



There are measures we can put in place for insect control to try and assist our horses however, to effectively control them, a multi-layered approach is recommended.

Environmental factors

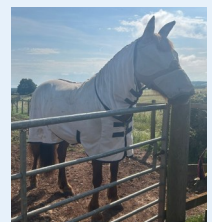
- Keep stables, fields, shelters, paddocks, pens, and arenas free from droppings – flies dine on droppings and will gather if droppings are left.
- Build muck heaps away from stables and fields.
- Ensure your horse's water supplies are changed every day, since flies love hanging around stagnant (old, still) water.

Horse care factors

- Cover open wounds to prevent flies from spreading infections or laying eggs.

Horse equipment

- Fly spray - using fly sprays, gels or creams that are suitable for horses is recommended, ensuring that you test a small patch on your horse before use. This should be applied daily ensuring you cover the horse particularly focusing around the more delicate areas such as ears, belly, teats / sheath etc.
- Fly rugs - there are a large number of fly rugs available on the market so ensure you do your research to check which may be best for your horse. These should be lightweight, breathable and designed to prevent flies landing on the horse.
- Fly masks - these are beneficial in protecting the eyes, ears and face from flies. Again, there's a range of designs suiting each horses specific preference, have a look at what's available but these are essential for keeping your horse comfortable during fly season.



In some cases, depending on environmental factors, horse breed and time of the year, standard fly control measures don't always cut it. If you need to look at alternative options, contact your vet who will be able to provide some further guidance and recommendations.