



FACT SHEET 7.11

NEIGHBOR RELATIONS: FLY, MOSQUITO AND RODENT CONTROL

Hobby farms have numerous areas that could attract and promote the breeding of pests. Compost piles, crop residue, manure and animal feed can encourage the presence of flies, mosquitoes, and rodents if not managed properly.

Consequently, because of the close proximity of neighboring properties, an increase in pest populations will create a nuisance for your neighbors. Hobby farmers can prevent infestations from occurring with good farm management practices that include an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program beginning with prevention.

RODENT CONTROL

Rodents can affect hobby farms in several ways. They can carry disease and contribute to the spread of other diseases caused by the parasites that infect them. Physical damage to structures can occur as a result of rodents chewing on materials such as wood, plastic, rubber and electrical wiring. Finally, rodents can cause crop damage, eat animal feed and even consume young chicks.

Techniques for controlling rodents:

- Introduce a predator such as a barn cat.
- Keep your barn, storage and animal areas clean by using good housekeeping practices.
- Keep all extra feed in sturdy, closed, rodent proof metal containers.
- Always clean up spilled feed and dispose of empty feed bags.
- Immediately dispose of or compost food waste.
- Don't leave food or water out at night.
- Fix leaky taps, hoses and pipes; and empty all water holding containers when not in use.
- Keep grass cut short and do not pile brush near structures.
- Remove old building materials and eliminate any other potential hiding spots.
- Remove and dispose of rodent nests as soon as they are found.
- Use proper compost and waste management techniques.

CAUTION!

Rodents are not only a nuisance and health hazard but with their inclination to chew on electrical wires, can be the cause of structural fires. Encase wires in metal conduit pipe to help prevent rodent access and use the above management techniques to help control rodent populations.



MOSQUITO CONTROL

Mosquitoes can be more than just an annoyance on and around a hobby farm; they can carry disease that may impact human and animal health. Horses, livestock and pets can be susceptible to diseases and parasites that mosquitoes carry and transmit. Hobby farms often offer a perfect environment where mosquitoes can thrive. Any standing water sources such as ditches, troughs, feed bowls and old tires can provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes if not regularly flushed or emptied. Maintaining proper drainage and taking measures to reduce mosquito populations around the farm will help protect you, your neighbors, and animals by lowering the risk of exposure to mosquito-borne disease.

Techniques for controlling mosquitoes:

- Provide proper drainage and infiltrate stormwater runoff where possible to prevent standing water.
- Flush or empty troughs and water bowls regularly.
- Prevent and eliminate standing water in old tires, clogged gutters, wheelbarrows, bird baths, buckets, and any other areas that can hold stagnant water.
- Inspect and fill puddles that may develop along roadways and in barnyards, animal yards and fields.
- Use yellow incandescent or fluorescent lights which are less attractive to mosquitoes.
- Increase air circulation in barn and stables to make it difficult for mosquitoes to navigate.
- Attract natural predators by installing bird and bat houses.
- Prevent untreated runoff from washing fertilizer and manure into waterbodies. This can promote weed and algae growth that can result in stagnant water – key mosquito habitat.

CAUTION!

The use of pesticides is always an option to control pests. However, consider the benefits vs. risks since many pesticides can be toxic to farm animals, crops, house pets and humans. Certain pesticides can also impact beneficial soil microorganisms, natural predators and pollinators. Always read the pesticide label first and follow instructions for both application and disposal.

FLY CONTROLS

House flies and stable flies are common pests found on hobby farms and can become a complaint among neighbors. Fly populations can peak during summer months as they reproduce in warm and damp environments that are often found around hobby farms. The Horn Fly and Face Fly are most common among pastures while the House Fly and Stable Fly are more often a problem around barns and stable areas. Having a small population of flies is common but an infestation usually indicates a failure in one or several key areas:

- Poor management of manure and compost piles.
- Inadequate drainage around the barnyard, allowing excessive moisture.
- Lack of daily good housekeeping practices and maintenance.
- Failure to clean up spilled feed or soiled straw bedding.

Eliminating favorable conditions for fly breeding is the first step toward controlling the population; however, a combination of control methods is often needed to reduce populations to an acceptable level.

Techniques for controlling flies

- Introduce biological controls to interrupt the reproductive cycles of flies. There are many beneficial insects (parasitic wasps, predatory beetles) that can provide natural and very effective fly management. The population of flies and their predators will reach a natural balance such that flies do not reach pest levels.
- Mound compost and manure in a large enough pile to maximize heat and make it less desirable for flies to lay eggs.
- Spread manure in a thin layer in fields and pastures to allow it to dry out.
- Routinely remove spilled feed and straw bedding to prevent moist areas in the barn and stalls.
- Clean feed tubs and buckets to avoid accumulating moist, decaying feed waste.
- Remove piles of rotting leaves, grass clippings, decaying fruit or vegetables from gardens where flies will lay eggs.
- Install pest strips, sticky traps and insect baits inside buildings.
- Attract natural predators by installing bird and bat houses.
- Install fans in buildings to make it difficult for flies to navigate.



WATER QUALITY BENEFIT

Be sure to prevent untreated stormwater runoff from your hobby farm that can carry nutrients and bacteria into nearby waterways. Protecting the water quality of nearby water resources can help promote habitat appealing to natural mosquito predators such as dragonflies, fish, birds, bats and amphibians.

HELPFUL LINKS

www.ag.umass.edu/crops-dairy-livestock-equine/fact-sheets/rodent-control

www.ag.umass.edu/crops-dairy-livestock-equine/fact-sheets/fly-control-measures