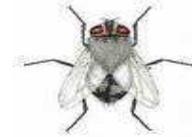


Pest Advice – Cluster Flies



What are Cluster Flies?

Cluster flies are found throughout the UK and their common name refers to their habit of forming clusters when “hibernating”, often in large numbers, in buildings. There are several species of cluster fly and swarming flies which have a similar hibernating nature and these may also be involved in forming mixed populations of flies inside buildings.

Biology of Cluster Flies

There are four common species of cluster flies;

- The Autumn Fly - a small fly of about the same size and colour as the housefly, but with a yellow abdomen.
- The Common Cluster Fly - a larger fly of a dull, dark, dusty brown/grey colour with a “tessellated” abdomen.
- The Green Cluster Fly - about the same size as a housefly, shiny green/blue in colour.
- The Yellow Swarming Fly - a smaller species of hibernating fly, yellowish body/black markings, sometimes confused with the fruit fly.

Cluster flies are “field” flies and in summer and early autumn they are of no consequence. However, as the weather becomes cooler, they seek out shelter in nooks and crannies in houses and other buildings. As the weather becomes colder, they search for more protection from the elements and may be seen in large numbers, particularly in roof spaces, lofts, etc, sometimes with several thousand flies clustered together.

Curiously, it has often been seen that a single house or one building in a row of similar buildings will be chosen year after year for this clustering phenomenon.

Large numbers of cluster flies can hibernate together and, if their local environment becomes warmer for any reason, they can emerge to fly around, rather lazily. They are attracted to light, and some will find their way into living areas, and the presence of large numbers of flies in winter, usually around windows, can cause concern to the building’s occupants. However, whilst cluster flies can be a source of nuisance on occasion, it is not considered that

they pose any risk to human health and their presence should not be taken as evidence of poor hygiene.

Prevention and Control

It is often difficult to keep flies from entering premises. It is likely that in many premises used by cluster flies that the areas or voids used are difficult, if not impossible, to locate. Although proofing is seldom 100% successful, sealing around window and door frames and other obvious entry points can assist in controlling their presence. Once flies are inside property, control can be relatively easily achieved with a range of insecticides and fly strips.

Use of insecticides

Sometimes a vacuum cleaner is all that is needed to collect the flies. Cluster-flies in small numbers can be treated with an ordinary fly spray, which can be purchased from garden centres, hardware/ironmongers shops, DIY stores, etc. (Always follow the manufacturers instructions when using insecticides.)

IMPORTANT NOTE: There is a possibility of bats living in the same areas in buildings used by cluster flies, and great care must be taken to survey the area for signs of bat presence. Please note that it is an offence to disturb or harm bats. In case of doubt, the relevant statutory authority must be notified before any insecticidal or other treatments are applied.

Use of repellents

Although not a proven method of control as such, the use of repellents such as citronella oil may be worth trying, particularly to prevent recurrence of cluster flies in future years. These repellents do not contain insecticides and may therefore be safer in some situations. As in the case of insecticides, always follow the manufacturers' instructions.

Professional advice & treatment

Powys County Council does not undertake treatment for cluster flies. Commercial pest control companies are listed on the internet, in the Yellow Pages and Thompson's Local Directory.