

House Flies

(House Fly – *Musca domestica*)



House fly (adult)



Flesh fly (look-alike)



Green bottle fly (look-alike)

Identification – The house fly is about 1/4 inch long and dull gray, with four dark stripes on its back and reddish eyes. A few look-alikes matter, because they point to different sources. **Flesh flies** are bigger and gray, with a checkerboard pattern on the abdomen and red eyes. In a house they usually mean something died, such as a mouse in a wall (often after someone used poison instead of traps), or that meat or fish scraps were left in the garbage for a week or more. **Blow flies**, the green and blue bottle flies, are shiny metallic green or blue, and they also breed in dead animals, meat scraps and garbage. **Cluster flies** are the slow, sluggish flies at the windows in fall and on warm winter days, and they don't breed indoors at all.

Why they're a problem – House flies breed in filth and then walk on your food, so they can carry disease-causing bacteria from feces and garbage to food and kitchen surfaces. They also breed fast. In summer heat they can go from egg to adult in 7 to 10 days, and one female can lay several hundred eggs.

What we find – Flies only breed in decaying organic matter. If they're regular house flies, the source is usually outside, such as dog waste in the yard or garbage that has sat outside for a week or more. Trash and recycling cans, compost and piles of wet grass clippings are other common spots, and the flies come in through open doors and torn screens. At businesses, we see maggots in the bottom of trash cans, dirty dumpster areas, dirty floor mats at the doors and back doors propped open. A sudden bunch of large flies in one part of the house, especially with a bad odor, usually means there's a dead animal nearby.

What works – Get rid of what they're breeding in. Because their life cycle is short and they breed so fast, the breeding material has to go right away. Sprays, traps and fly bait are only tools in an overall fly program that hinges on sanitation and trash removal. Fly bait reduces numbers, but it doesn't last more than a day or two, and the label restricts where it can be used. Fly light traps work indoors when they're mounted 5 to 6 feet off the floor. Don't put light traps outside, though, because they'll attract every flying insect for a mile to the building.

What you can do – Most home fly problems are solved with a little cleanup. Pick up after the dog every day, especially in summer. Bag your garbage, keep tight lids on your trash and recycling cans, and rinse the cans out now and then. Don't let trash sit for a week in the heat, and keep the cans away from the doors. Repair torn screens and keep doors closed, and for a few strays, a fly swatter still works fine.

When to call Dynamic – Give us a call if you have a lot of flies indoors and can't find the source, if big flies suddenly show up in one room or near a bad smell, or if you've had mice and now have flies. For restaurants and other businesses, we set up fly lights and an overall fly program. If you're not sure what kind of fly it is, send us a close-up photo of one fly and we'll identify it for you. Flies breed in very specific places, and knowing the type tells us where to look.