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Cluster flies are found throughout the UK and their common name refers to their habit of forming clusters when "hibernating" - in often large numbers - in buildings.

Whilst there is a specific species of common cluster fly (*Pollenia rudis*), there are other 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 suitable buildings.

The life cycle of the Cluster Fly is very much dependent on the prevailing weather conditions, and in this country, two generations a year are usual but in hot summers, up to four generations per year are possible.

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.

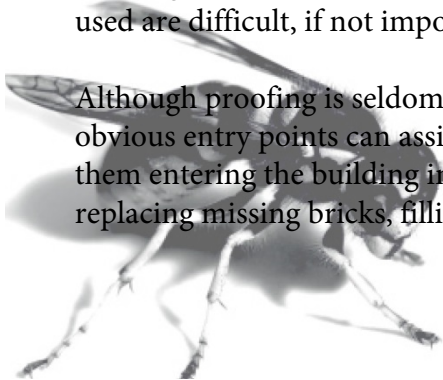
Curiously, it has been seen that a single house or one building in a row of similar buildings will be chosen year after year for this clustering phenomenon.

Large numbers of cluster flies hibernating together are capable of producing a sickly smell and, if their local environment becomes warmer for any reason, they can emerge to fly around, albeit rather lazily. They are attracted to light, and some will find their way into living areas, and the presence of large 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.

As cluster flies do not breed indoors, the control of these flies outdoors is impractical. Control methods for cluster and swarming flies are often ineffective or incomplete. It is often impossible to keep flies from entering premises. Indeed, 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. The best method of control is to prevent them entering the building in the first place, especially by blocking any access into cavity walls, e.g. replacing missing bricks, filling in other holes, etc.



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Once flies are inside property, control can be relatively easily achieved with a range of insecticides and fly strips.

Insecticides can be purchased from garden centres/shops, hardware/ironmongers shops, DIY stores, etc.

Please note the following precautions:

Insecticides and pesticides are potentially dangerous, and always: store them away from children and pets; read the label on whichever product is being used and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully; take whatever precautions are advised/recommended; ensure good ventilation; avoid inhaling vapours and spray; wash hands after use; do not use near open food or on preparation surfaces.

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 it is an offence just to disturb bats. In case of doubt, contact the Nature England on 0845 600 3078

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.

Source Bridgend CC



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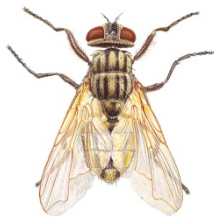
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Flies are a very diverse group of insects and contain the most serious insect pests in the world. Many of them spread diseases and mosquitoes are responsible for more deaths in humans (and animals) than any other organism. Many flies can bite and suck our blood; many infest food; others help in the decomposition of dead carcasses; and others hibernate in large numbers in our buildings. The common ones are as follows:

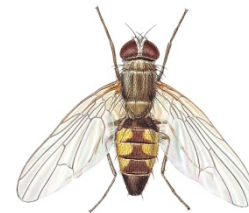
Houseflies: There are two common species of housefly, the common and lesser houseflies. Both will breed on decaying organic matter which includes household food waste but also compost heaps and wild and domestic animal manure. They breed very quickly with adult houseflies being able to complete their life cycle within a week in ideal conditions.



Common Housefly



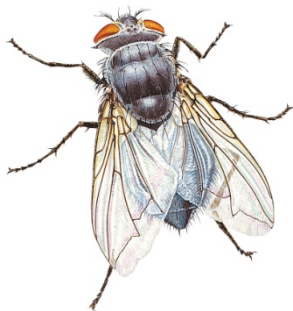
Housefly maggot



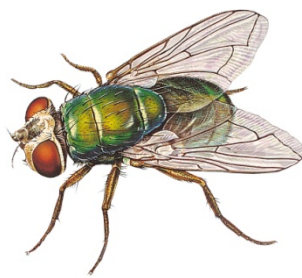
Lesser Housefly

Because of the material houseflies breed in they are capable of picking up harmful bacteria and other disease organisms on their feet and bodies and transmitting them to us via our food. Fortnightly food waste collections by Councils can also lead to fly problems in the summer months.

Blowflies: Blowflies is the common name given to a group of flies that invade dead bodies and help in their decomposition. The countryside would be littered with animal bodies if it wasn't for blowflies. However they can also infest any meat products so food waste and pet food can also become infested as will any animal body which dies indoors (birds or rodents usually). Blowflies include the blue and greenbottles as well as the flesh flies. The adults tend to be large and very noisy. The maggots are commonly used by anglers as bait.



Bluebottle



Greenbottle



Blowfly maggots

Mosquitoes: Mosquitoes breed in stagnant water where their aquatic larvae feed on small organisms living in the water. In domestic situations they commonly breed in water butts or water lying in blocked gutters, flat roofs or even in old containers and garden ponds. It is only the adult females that bite and suck blood, the males being totally harmless and just feeding on nectar. In the UK there are no serious diseases transmitted by mosquitoes, but this could occur in the future with global warming. However, the bites are annoying and outdoor activities can be spoilt by mosquito infestations.



Anopheles Mosquito



Culex Mosquito

Cluster Flies: There are several species of flies called cluster flies that live outdoors for most of the year but cluster together in very large numbers to hibernate in buildings. They frequently arrive in the autumn at domestic properties, usually in the attic or roof space and, if not discovered, will leave again in the spring. They do not feed or spread any diseases but can be quite alarming if discovered in the loft as there can be tens of thousands of individuals.



The Cluster Fly



Cluster Flies on Window Sill

Control of flies is different for the differing groups but a common theme in solving the problem is identification of the adult flies as a first action. This can then lead to a possible source which it may be possible to eliminate. The use of pesticides alone rarely solves any fly problems.