Insect Control in 3 Easy Steps

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simple steps for better bug control

Oftentimes, equine insect control seems like a never-ending battle. Flies seem to continually gather around your horse's legs. Mosquitoes seem to bombard anyone who enters the barn. A day on the trail can turn into an evening of tick removal. But there are simple steps you can take to better control flies, mosquitoes, gnats, ticks, and other pests around your horse, barn, stable, pasture, and home.

Step One: Prevent Equine Insects

Most insects thrive in barns and pastures. Flies flourish in moist, dirty manure piles. Mosquitoes relish standing water in troughs and buckets. Ticks seek longer pasture grasses. It makes sense then that one way to control most species of insects is to eliminate the locations in which they find refuge. Ideal preventive measures include:

Clean Often - Muck stalls and remove manure daily with a suitable fork and bucket. Keep grass cut short, especially near the barn. Rake away excess grass, hay, and leaves. Store treats, supplements, grains and foods in suitable storage bins.

Feed Smart - Lift grains, hay, and treats off of the ground with a suitable feeder. Not only will this help prevent food sources from soaking up moisture, but it also gives flies one less location in which to lay their eggs.

Remove Standing Water - Empty buckets and eliminate standing water around all livestock troughs. Stagnant water is a popular breeding site for mosquitoes and some flies.

Circulate Air - Plug in or install fans throughout your barn or stable. Stagnant air traps moisture and the scent of manure and garbage, which attract flies and mosquitoes.

Step Two: Reduce Insect Exposure

Some insects travel great distances to find food. Unfortunately, this means flies, mosquitoes, gnats, and other pests could invade your barn, pasture, and home, even if they do not inhabit the immediate area. However, there are a variety of perimeter sprays, traps, and control techniques you can use to kill and repel these traveling nuisances. Effective environmental controls include:

Spray the Perimeter - Spray a suitable insecticide throughout your barn. Several styles of perimeter sprays are available to make the area inhospitable to insects.

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Set Traps - Lure, catch, and contain insects with a suitable trap. These devices emit combinations of scent, heat, moisture, carbon dioxide, or vibrations to entice insects.

Reduce Light - Turn off or dim stall, barn, pasture, porch, and house lights at night. Mosquitoes, flies, moths, and more are attracted to lights.

Befriend Birds and Bats - Install bat or bird houses around your property. Mosquitoes, flies, and other bugs are a favorite food of birds and bats.

Step Three: Protect Individual Horses

Insects are nothing if not resilient. Despite your best efforts to eliminate fly, mosquito, and insect habitats and control the environment throughout your barn, pasture, and home, insects may still annoy your horse. Plus, chances are your horse spends at least some time on the riding trail or at competitions, which are far away from the areas in which you've worked to control insects. Thankfully, there are a variety of insect control products available. Individual insect control methods to protect your horse include:

Dress Your Horse - Protect your horse with a suitable fly mask and sheet.

Use Repellents - Spray, wipe-on, roll-on, or dust an insect repellent onto your horse.

Deworm Your Horse - Control internal parasites in your horse on a regular basis to help keep him healthy.

The Importance of Insect Control

At their most basic, flies, mosquitoes, ticks, and other insects are a nuisance to you and your horse. But even the annoyance of just a few insects has resulted in some serious equine injuries. Horses have barreled through pasture fences to escape a swarm of mosquitoes. Hooves have been injured due to continual stomping in response to a few pesky flies. Normal feeding habits have been interrupted and serious cases of colic have ensued.

Worse, many insects are carriers of potentially serious diseases. Flies are known to transmit typhoid, dysentery, and tuberculosis. Mosquitoes carry West Nile Virus and equine encephalitis. Ticks can spread Lyme disease. True, some insect-borne diseases have no effect on your horse. However, they can affect you and your family.

Because of their resilience, insect control may seem like a daunting task. However, working to eliminate suitable insect habitats, control the environment around your barn and pasture, and individually protect your horse will offer the best protection possible.

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