

How to Protect Your Horse from Flies

You can help your horse avoid the annoying effects of flies by using a combination of these items of horse clothing and topical treatments. For effective methods of reducing the fly population on your farm, refer to the article, "How to Control Flies on the Farm."

- *Fly sheets* have an open weave mesh to keep bugs off a horse's body. Some models of fly sheet are impregnated with insect repellent for added protection.
- *Fly masks*, sometimes called fly bonnets, are made of see-through mesh. They keep flies, which can be attracted to eye secretions, from landing in horses' eyes and causing infections. Fly masks come in a variety of styles, including those that cover the ears and that extend to the end of the nose. Some fly mask models are designed of very fine, lightweight mesh for use over bridles during riding, and others are made of sturdier mesh to stand up to the rigors of turnout and horseplay.
- *Ear nets*, sometimes called fly hoods or ear muffs, are a tool that some riders use to keep flies and other bugs from bothering a horse's ears during riding. Ear nets are usually made of crocheted yarn or a combination of crocheted yarn and fabric. They are designed to be worn over a horse's ears with a flap that goes under the browband. Fringe along the edges helps deter insects from bothering a horse's eyes.

Note: If you intend to compete with your horse wearing an ear net, be sure to check the rules and regulations regarding your classes. The use of ear nets may be prohibited except during warm-up and schooling.

- *Fly wraps* are mesh leg coverings designed to keep flies off a horse's legs and may help reduce stomping.
- *Fly collars* are impregnated with repellent to ward off flies, mosquitoes and gnats from the horse's head and neck.
- *Fly Sprays, fly wipes and fly roll-ons* are available in many all-natural and synthetic formulas that not only repel flies but gnats, mosquitoes, ticks and other insects as well. Active ingredients in sprays may include organic pyrethrin derived from the chrysanthemum plant or oils and essences that are naturally repellent to insects, such as cedar, citronella or peppermint. Or they

may include synthetically derived permethrin, a strong deterrent to ticks, in an inert base. Repellents are designed to prevent insects from landing on your horse, but they do not kill them. Insecticides actually kill the bugs that come in contact with them. Some fly products combine the effects of both repellents and insecticides.

Dover Saddlery product advisors recommend that you test any new batch of fly spray on your horse prior to a full application to check for allergic reaction. For optimal performance, be sure to follow manufacturer's guidelines for any spray, and apply it to a clean horse as directed on the label. Also, check the application rate recommended by the manufacturer. Some are designed to be sweat resistant and can be applied less frequently. Apply fly repellent or insecticide to your horse's face carefully by wiping it on or using a targeted product such as a roll-on to avoid his eyes.

Sweat, urine and manure stains make horses more attractive to flies. Be sure your horse is clean before applying your fly product to achieve the best results. Also, you should rotate between the types of fly sprays you use because over time, flies can become accustomed to the scent of a spray, making it less effective. However, bathing your horse between applications of different types of fly sprays is wise to prevent reaction between the active ingredients.

Note: When you're spraying repellents and insecticides on your horse, remember that the overspray may kill any fly predators in the immediate area.



- *Spot On Treatments* such as Farnam Equispot and Freedom 45 Spot On Fly Control are also available for use to control and kill flies and other insects that bother horses and carry disease. These treatments are applied less frequently than other topical treatments, so you should be sure to follow manufacturer's instructions for application.
- *Swat* is a thick cream that is impregnated with a natural repellent. It is designed to be used near open wounds and sensitive areas such as the belly line to ward off infection-causing flies.

Related Topics

[How to Control Flies on the Farm](#)

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