

A Bug's Life Entomopathogenic fly fungus

Entomophthora muscae

Fun facts

- Airborne spores attach to external surface of adult flies
- Microscopic spores can be transferred during mating
- *Entomophthora* means "insect destroyer" because it is fatal to flies
- Fungus affects fly's brain causing it to climb as high as possible to increase spore dispersal
- Fungus kills flies at dusk

Identification

- Occurs to house flies, fruit flies, and many other types of dipterans
- Occurs in spring and fall
- Dead flies glued to vegetation at tip of branch, flower, stem or leaf
- Bodies appear ringed with fluffy spores visible through extended abdominal segments
- Proboscis may be extended and wings remain stuck open

Management

- Fungus is harmless for humans, animals, and plants
- Entomopathogenic fungi are considered biological control agents for insects, but this one is not commercially available
- Over 50 species in genus that infect different insects
- No management or fungicide treatment required



Photos: J. Green