

Cluster Flies Invading Homes\
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If a home or other building seems to have been invaded by hundreds of flies this fall, these are likely cluster flies. While a nuisance, they do not cause any damage or harm people or pets and they do not reproduce indoors.

To help identify them, cluster flies are slightly larger than a house fly, about three-sixteenth of an inch long, and have golden-yellow hairs on their bodies. If crushed, they smell like buckwheat honey.

As temperatures cool in the fall, these flies cluster on the south and west sides of buildings during the day for warmth. Many find their way indoors to overwinter, especially in attics or lofts.

They may seem to disappear and then reappear on warm winter days when they become active and make their way into living quarters. This is why homeowners assume they are breeding in the home but they are not.

A common question asked is where do cluster flies come from and the answer is the soil as they feed on earthworms. Adult females lay eggs near openings of earthworm burrows. After hatching, larvae move into burrows and penetrate earthworms to feed. They pupate in soil and adult flies emerge.

In the fall, adult flies seek protected areas like tree cavities and buildings to overwinter. They invade attics and get under siding or around windows or other crevices on buildings. Many eventually congregate between walls and may enter rooms through openings in window frames and electrical fixtures.

The best way to manage cluster flies is to prevent them from entering buildings. Where possible, seal cracks and crevices with silicone or silicone-latex caulk and use weather stripping around doors. Areas to focus on are around windows, doors, siding, utility pipes, behind chimneys and underneath fascia. Repair any damaged screens.

Indoors, trap cluster flies with sticky traps or sweep and vacuum flies when active. They tend to be sluggish and are easy to swat. It is not recommended to treat wall voids with insecticides as the dead flies can attract other pests such as carpet beetles. These beetles will damage woolens and dried home goods.

If numerous flies are emerging inside of a home, try to locate the openings they are using, such as cracks behind baseboards, openings around windows, or ceiling lights. If feasible, seal or screen these openings. Do not use insecticide foggers as these will not control cluster flies and may not be safe.

While I've had the most questions about cluster flies, other incidental invaders that overwinter in our homes include multicolored Asian lady beetles, boxelder bugs, western conifer seed bugs and brown marmorated stink bugs. These too only overwinter and do not damage to structures or people. They are managed the same as cluster flies.

For information on indoor and other insects, go to the Douglas-Sarpy County website and click on Indoors. <https://extension.unl.edu/statewide/douglas-sarpy/insects/>

Source: UNL and Penn State Extension