


## Horsekeeper Hints



Don't let flies invade your barn this summer. Instead, employ this three-step strategy to keep pests off your horse, out of the barn, and away from your property.

# Banish Pests From the Barn

Use these proven tips from fly-control experts to keep your facility fly-free this summer.

By Kaycie Timm

**F**ive minutes in a fly-filled barn can feel like an eternity, between swatting at biting bugs and dodging swishing tails and stomping feet. But insects pose more than just a nuisance—a bug bite on your horse can result in serious skin issues and even life-threatening diseases (read more about fly-induced illnesses starting on page 82). The key to preventing those ailments starts with banishing problematic pests from your facility. To accomplish that, you'll need to enact a three-step strategy to keep flies off your horse, out of the barn, and away from your property.

## Step One: Fortify Your Facility

Launch your battle against pests by ensuring that your property is clean and employing preventative measures in areas that are most likely to attract flies.

“Cleanliness in your barn is the first step,” NRHA Professional Casey Hinton shares. “Make sure you don’t have old feed or old hay laying around, wash and clean around your barn daily, and eliminate standing water.”

If ponds and puddles pose a problem on your property, a product like Mosquito Dunks, which are sold by NRHA Corporate Partner SmartPak Equine, can be helpful. These dissolving disks release a larvicide in the water that kills mosquito larvae before they have the chance to mature.

Another key aspect to fly prevention is proper disposal of manure and soiled bedding. A dirty stall makes an ideal breeding ground for flies, as does a manure pile that’s not managed properly. All manure should be spread in areas away from your barn, pastures, and riding space.

“When you move manure, take that pile as far away from the barn as possible,” explains Greg Cunningham, managing partner for Pyranha. “Spreading manure is the best way, because a manure pile is the main breeding area for flies.”

If spreading manure isn’t an option on your property, look for composting companies where you can take manure from your facility. No matter which tactic you use, manure management plays a big part in reducing pests by eliminating a prime breeding ground.

## Step Two: Arm Your Barn

Once you’ve addressed major areas of concern around your property, select an environmental-control system that best suits your barn. After considering the factors listed opposite, protect your barn from flies by implementing defense



## Fitting Fly Control

When developing your fly-control program, experts at NRHA Corporate Partner SmartPak Equine suggest taking these factors into account.

- Property size
- Number of horses
- Type of facility (private, boarding, breeding, training, etc.)
- Geographic region and corresponding climate
- Horse health concerns (such as allergies to certain insects)

options such as fly traps, spray systems, or fly predators.

Fly traps, which simply catch flies as they buzz around the barn, are perhaps the most common choice. They're often used in combination with other prevention strategies. Various types of traps use liquid, sticky tape, and other materials to attract and capture flies. You can also choose to employ the help of other insects, often called predators, that feed on fly larva and won't harm you or your horses.

"We use a combination of products, including Starbar Golden Malrin Fly Bait," Hinton reveals. "When we finish for the day, we put the Golden Malrin granules down in the barn alleyways, so they stay overnight until the next morning. When we clean and sweep up the next day, the fly bait goes out in the manure spreader or to the manure pile, so it kills flies there, too."

One option that offers nearly complete control of the fly population in your barn is an automated spray system, which kills flies in various life stages by



Stop fly development in your manure pile by using SmartPak Equine's FlyStoppers, which are tiny insects that feed on flies in the pupal stages of growth.

dispensing a fine mist of repellent through nozzles installed around your barn.

"The secret to fly control is breaking the breeding cycle of the fly," Cunningham says. "Pyranha's SprayMaster system kills all the flies in the barn and stops others that try to come in and lay eggs in your horse's manure. As soon as any eggs already in the barn hatch, the spray system will kill the larvae, too. Then you've broken the breeding cycle."

One nozzle can cover up to a 15-by-15-foot area. It's best to install a nozzle in each stall, in grooming bays, at the entrances and exits of the barn, and even outside in covered paddocks or near a muck pile. Set a timer, and the spray handles the rest—no need to mix, pump, and spray by hand, which can be time-consuming and less



Stop bugs from breeding in standing water on your property with Mosquito Dunks, which are available online from SmartPak Equine.

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### Fight From the Feed Room

In addition to arming your horse externally, you can combat flies by adding insect control-focused supplements to your horse's feed regimen. Most insect control supplements fall into two main categories:

**1. Insect growth regulators.** This type of feed additive employs larvacides (like diflurobenzuron and cyromazine), which pass safely through your horse's digestive tract and kill fly larvae in your horse's manure, thus inhibiting the development of house and stable flies. Because these products aim to reduce the population of insects on your property as a whole, they're most effective when fed to all the horses in your barn.

**2. Insect defense supplements.** These will make your horse unappealing to biting bugs by providing key ingredients like garlic, apple cider vinegar, and brewer's yeast. This is an effective choice if you're the only one in your barn whose horse will receive the supplement, because it works on an individual basis. If all the horses in your barn receive an insect growth regulator, you can feed a defense supplement, too, to keep your horse bug-free even when he's not at home.

NRHA Corporate Partner SmartPak Equine offers supplement options in both these categories. Visit [smartpakequine.com](http://smartpakequine.com) to shop.

effective. The fine mist produced at predetermined increments controls flies, mosquitos, ticks, fleas, spiders, roaches, and other pesky insects, keeping both horses and people in your barn comfortable and bug-free. Take note: Don't use any type of living fly predators if you have a fly control system; the spray will kill those helpful bugs, too.

#### Step Three: Protect Your Horse

Once you've taken care of your property and your barn, the final step is giving your horse some extra protection. Keep bugs off your horse with fly spray while you're riding, and use physical barriers, such as fly masks, fly sheets, and fly boots, to prevent insects from biting while he's turned out.

"We use fly sheets on our horses, even though it's hot here in Texas," Hinton says. "We also spray all our horses before we ride so they don't have any distraction from flies."

Fly sprays and repellents work in three different ways, so choose according to your horse's needs. Insecticides, such as Absorbine UltraShield EX fly spray, kill insects directly on contact. Other sprays, including SmartPak Equine's OutSmart fly spray, discourage flies from landing on your horse but don't actually kill the insects. Fly repellents, including Ecovet fly repellent, which is also available from SmartPak Equine, work by confusing flies and preventing them from finding your horse at all. No matter which type you choose, re-apply the product frequently, especially when your horse is working—and sweating.

Overall, experts agree that the most effective fly-prevention strategy takes a comprehensive approach by using a combination of products. You might need to try a few different strategies until you find the best fit for your property and horses. ❖



The Pyranha SprayMaster system includes a drum, a timer, tubing, and nozzles—everything you need to create a fly-free zone. Just pour in the Pyranha concentrate, add water, and your fly-control system will do the rest.



Designed for use in Pyranha's SprayMaster system, 1-10 HP kills flies, mosquitos, fleas, gnats, and other pests on contact, keeping your barn bug-free.



Pyranha's ZeroBite offers an all-natural choice for fly elimination.