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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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Subject: "FIGHTING HOUSE FLIES." Information from the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Listeners, the time to start the fight on the house-fly is early in the spring when he is just coming out from winter quarters. But don't let that stop you from going after him now. The entomologists say that if you didn't start in the spring, you have still many ways of keeping flies out of your house and away from your food.

Time was, you know, when everybody thought of the fly as just one of the harmless annoyances of summer. In fact, many people even enjoyed the sound of a buzzing fly because it suggested warm lazy summer days. But the time is past when most of us feel at peace with the world as long as we have to share our homes and our food with flies. You can hardly be tolerant of an insect which the scientists have proved to be the carrier of about 30 diseases of various kinds, among them typhoid fever and the infantile diarrhea which has caused the death of so many babies in summer.

As you have heard, the best way to destroy the fly is to destroy his breeding place. Flies breed in open filth -- manure, garbage, unsanitary dumping grounds, dirty horse-stables, pig-sties, chicken-yards, and so on. But unless flies can find such places to lay their eggs, their population will be very small. You can help by making sure that flies can reach no such places on your property. But you'll have fly-trouble just the same unless your neighbors keep their property clean, too, for flies have been known to travel as far as 13 miles. You see why the entomologists say that a successful fight on flies is up to the individual and also to the community. It is a cooperative affair.

Many cities have cut down their fly population by sanitary laws about the disposal of garbage and by modern sewage. And, of course, in modern cities, where motor cars have largely replaced horses, the problem of horse manure as fly breeding material has almost ceased to exist. In fact, the entomologists predict that people who live in clean cities will soon not know what a fly looks like -- won't even need screens at the window to keep them out.

But in small towns and on farms fly-control is more difficult and individuals have to take special methods of protecting themselves against these pests.

On the farm, controlling flies is more difficult. Here manure is still to be found. To prevent fly breeding it should be cleaned up twice a week during the summer months, and scattered thinly over fields where it will be useful as fertilizer. The entomologists tell us that an alternative to this method of control is the use of borax or hellebore in proper proportion. One half pound of powdered hellebore dissolved in 10 gallons of water is sufficient to kill the fly maggots in 10 cubic feet of manure when sprinkled over it. Borax may also be used in a water solution at the rate of 1 pound per 16 cubic feet of manure.

But I'm really wandering from what I started out to tell you -- ways of keeping flies out of your home in summer.

Nobody has discovered anything better than screens for protection against flies. Of course, that means screens at every opening in the house. Screens in just a few windows are hardly better than none. Every door needs its screen. Full-length screens at windows add greatly to summer comfort because then you can open windows at top or bottom for better ventilation. Also full-length screens prevent cracks between the upper edges and the top sash that admit both flies and other insects.

Copper screening is probably the best anti-fly investment known. Copper screens won't rust and they will last for years. Though copper costs a little more, it proves economical in the long run because it lasts so long. The cheapest kind of screening is painted or galvanized steel. It is satisfactory in both dry and humid climates, and it will last for several seasons if you brush it with oil when you store your screens in the fall.

The few flies that do manage to slip into your house in spite of the screens, you can deal with in various ways. The old-fashioned weapons are still on the market for you to choose from -- sticky fly paper, fly poisons, swats and sprays.

Fly-paper and poisons are slow and inconvenient ways of going after stray flies. More than that, fly-paper is a nuisance to have around the house, to say nothing of its unpleasant appearance, and care must be exercised in the use of fly poisons to make sure you do not endanger the lives of your children or pets. As for fly-swatting, I don't have to tell you that this is a rather arduous method of warfare.

In recent years more and more people are using fly sprays, especially since the entomologists have developed a spray that is deadly to flies but quite harmless to human beings. This spray is known as kerosene extract of pyrethrum. It may be made up at home if you wish, although most of the fly sprays on the market contain pyrethrum extract. To make the spray, soak one pound of fresh pyrethrum flowers in one gallon of kerosene for 48 hours with occasional stirrings. At the end of this period drain off the liquid and it is ready for use. Not all the flies in a room will be killed immediately but most of them will fall to the floor in a few minutes. They should be swept up and burned or otherwise destroyed. This spray is entirely safe for household use.

By the way, pyrethrum is effective against other insects besides flies. Burning pyrethrum powder is an old and quite effective method of killing mosquitoes. The dry powder has also been used for control of fleas on dogs. However, for this purpose derris powder is better.