

## ACTIVE INGREDIENTS

The bulk of fly control products sprayed onto horses contain pyrethrins, natural insecticides produced by certain species of the chrysanthemum plant. A synthetic form is also available, called pyrethroids. They tend to be more effective than natural pyrethrins.

Pyrethrins are believed to be one of the least poisonous insecticides to mammals, but they are lethal to flies. Pyrethrins destroy a fly's nervous system.

While they are naturally occurring, it is clear from reading the labels on most products that contain pyrethrins that they can be hazardous.

Labels warn that the products are not for use on humans, are harmful if swallowed and can irritate eyes and skin. A first aid warning is also generally included on the label.

Many kinds of fly sprays also have kerosene or diesel fuel as a component, upping their toxicity.

The least toxic of the fly sprays appear to be those that are citronella based.

Oil of Citronella is derived from dried cultivated grasses. It is truly a repellent, relying on its distinctive odor rather than its killing ability.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, citronella shows little or no toxicity, but it can irritate human skin. It has been used extensively since 1948 with no reports of adverse effects.

## SOME WORK, SOME DON'T

One of the more mystifying aspects of fly control products is that certain brands are more effective than others, but the following year, that particular brand might not be effective in the least.

The short answer is that flies come in a wide variety of species. Some are easier to kill than others.

Stable and house flies are the most common.

They are similar in size, appearance and life cycle. Stable flies have sucking mouth parts and attack horses and feed on their blood. The bite causes horses to react, usually by stomping a foot and swishing a tail.

Stable flies generally attack a horse's legs and abdomen.

House flies don't bite, but considering a horse can feel a horse landing on its rump, they can be quite annoying. House flies feed on secretions around the horse's eyes.

Your customers may also experience infestations of face flies, black flies, horn flies, deer flies, not to mention gnats, mosquitoes, bots, grubs, lice, ticks, biting midges and chiggers. While some repellants are rated to work on various flies and other insects, others are more fly specific.

## ALSO CONSIDER...

■ Repellants come in oil-, water- and alcohol-based varieties. Which a customer will pick is mostly personal choice. Oil-based products can leave a buildup on the horse's coat. Water-based repellants don't last as long, and alcohol-based versions dry a horse's hair. It's best to have a variety of each available.

■ There are as many home remedies for flies as there are horses. Most of these have never been tested for the specific purpose of fly protection and may work in some instances but not in others. Garlic is believed to be a natural fly repellent; however, some veterinarians believe garlic may actually be harmful to horses.

■ Not all people and not all horses are terribly bothered by flies. The tolerance limit for both will often determine how extensive a fly control arsenal a customer will purchase. At the opposite extreme, some customers don't expect effective fly control from sprays. They do it simply for peace of mind.

■ Fly control products that incorporate sun screen, coat conditioner and other products that solve more than one problem for your customers should be on your shelves. They're time savers, an important factor for busy horse owners.

■ Like most other equine product lines, fly repellants come in a variety of price ranges. Be sure you have products that are less expensive, moderately priced and more expensive to satisfy a variety of needs. Often, fly spray customers believe they "get what they pay for." ■

