

Drain Flies

Phillip E. Sloderbeck

Extension Specialist
Entomology, Southwest

Introduction

Drain flies, sometimes called moth flies, are common but often overlooked insects associated with moist, highly organic areas such as sink drains, sewage treatment facilities, storm drains, dung and rotten vegetation. The immature stage or larvae are an essential part of the cycle that breaks down waste into water-soluble compounds. However, the adult flies can sometimes become numerous enough in the vicinity of breeding areas to be annoying.

Description

Adult drain flies are tiny and very hairy with pointed wings. The wings are held roof-like over the body when at rest. They are weak fliers and often appear to be jumping or hopping. Flight and mating activities normally occur in the evening hours when they are attracted to lights. Each female can produce about one hundred eggs.

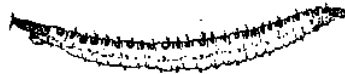


Adult Drain Fly

Eggs hatch into small pale-colored larvae. They feed on fungi, bacteria, algae and

other microorganisms, but may become cannibalistic.

The larvae are very hearty being able to survive temperature extremes and low oxygen. They commonly are found in the liquid or slime layers that develop around debris in drains, in spite of the hot water, soap and other materials that flow through them. They can also breed in dirty garbage containers, septic tanks, sewage treatment beds and standing water.



Drain Fly Larva

Following the feeding period, the larvae pupate and soon emerge as adult flies. Under optimum conditions development can be completed in 2 weeks. Adults live only 3 to 4 days without food but can survive for weeks if nectar or other liquid carbohydrate sources are available.

Control

Some products containing permethrin (Dragnet and Flee Insecticide) are labeled for drain fly control and may provide some relief by killing adults. In addition, pest strips containing dichlorvos (Vapona) or various space spray, insecticides labeled

for general flying insect control can also be useful in reducing adult numbers. However, a longer lasting control measure is to eliminate the areas where the larvae are developing. Thorough cleaning of drain traps with drain cleaners, and long-handled brushes will remove hair and trapped debris. Another source of drain flies can be standing water in saucers and pans under house plants. Be sure these are allowed to dry out between waterings.

Control of infestations outside the home depends on finding the source of the infestations. Examples of potential larval habitats are water coolers, air conditioners, bird baths, decorative ponds or other places containing standing water and decaying vegetation. Clean, remove or drain the breeding area(s).

Adapted from:

Drain Flies L-2037
House and Landscape Pests
Bastiaan M. Drees and
John M. Owens
Texas A&M Ag. Ext. Service
June 1982

Entomology 315 (L.D.*)

July 1996

* L.D. - A Limited Distribution Publication
Not available from Distribution Center



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY, MANHATTAN

KSU, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating. All educational programs and materials available without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.