

Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel



Department of Entomology
123 West Waters Hall
K-State Research and Extension
Manhattan, Kansas 66506
785-532-5891
<http://www.entomology.ksu.edu/extension>

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Face flies

With the advent of colder weather, many insects seek to enter man-made structures for shelter, whether residences or outbuildings. In this regard, the face fly, *Musca autumnalis*, can be especially problematic in rural areas where cattle are pastured. Although very similar in appearance to its close relative, the house fly, the face fly has very different biology and is most easily distinguish by its behavior; they are slow moving and tend to form large clusters in the evenings. Adults feed largely from the mucous secretions produced around the nose and eyes of cattle; eggs are laid in fresh cow patties where the larvae feed until completing development. Thus there is no practical way of controlling face fly reproduction near cattle grazing or feeding operations, although some level of adult control may be obtained with insecticidal ear tags.





House fly

Face flies also vector pink eye disease to cattle, making them worthy of concern to the rancher for this reason. However, it is the fall aggregation behavior of the face fly that is the bane of rural homeowners as swarms of them gradually accumulate in attics and under garage roofs. Lower temperatures and shorter day lengths cue this behavior. By day, the flies will buzz around actively; by night they form dense clusters on beams and joists. In an unheated building like a garage, almost all of these flies will die over the course of the winter, raining down on vehicles and equipment below. Like so many other urban pest problems, exclusion is the best solution, but depending on the structure, this may not always be possible or practical to implement, which brings me to share a solution I regularly implement in my own garage around this time of year.

Once the accumulation of face flies appears to be largely complete (usually after the first hard freeze), I take a step ladder and a canister vacuum cleaner with a long extension wand and simply vacuum the clusters off the beams under my garage roof. The flies are killed by the force of the vacuum – you need not worry about them re-emerging later in your house. The ideal time to do this is early on a cold morning; the flies will be very sluggish and aggregated in tight clusters which facilitates their easy removal. At low temperature, their only recourse for escape is to drop, so a careful and systematic vacuuming process can easily accomplish complete removal on the first attempt.

J.P. Michaud

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What Is That Insect? It Is...The Red-Shouldered Bug

We are getting inquiries regarding populations (sometimes extensive) of the red-shouldered bug (*Jadera haematoloma*) gathering on the south and west sides of homes and buildings. These insects are similar in appearance to the boxelder bug (*Leptocoris trivittatus*) but adults lack the central red stripe on the pronotum of the thorax and red markings on the wings. Instead, red-shouldered bugs possess a distinctive red line on both sides of the thorax or “shoulder.” They are somewhat flattened insects, 3/8 to 5/8 inches in length. Nymphs resemble the adults in appearance but are more oval-shaped and possess wing pads; not wings. Adults attempt to overwinter in a protected location including homes. They may also overwinter in the soil or leaf litter near building foundations. Red-shouldered bugs primarily feed on the seeds of the golden-rain tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*), and become a nuisance when they enter homes and buildings to overwinter. This insect is native to the United States.

The primary means of dealing with red-shouldered bugs is by preventing entry through sealing or caulking any potential entry sites such as cracks and crevices. Spraying the outside of a home or building with a contact insecticide such as carbaryl (Sevin), a pyrethroid-based insecticide (e.g., bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, or permethrin), or insecticidal soap (potassium salts of fatty acids) may reduce the number that may eventually enter homes or buildings. Once red-shouldered bugs enter homes or buildings, there are very few effective management options other than vacuuming them up, and disposing of them from the bags outdoors. They do not transmit any diseases.

In Manhattan, KS there is a line of mature golden-rain trees opposite the soccer field on Denison Ave, and on warm, sunny days you may find massive numbers of red-shouldered bugs congregating on the branches of the junipers located below the golden rain trees (see images). If you have any inquiries regarding red-shouldered bugs feel free to contact your local extension office or a university-based extension entomologist.

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Raymond Cloyd

Sincerely,

Raymond A. Cloyd
Extension Specialist
Ornamental Entomology/Integrated Pest Management
Phone: 785-532-4750
Fax: 785-532-6232
e-mail: rcloyd@ksu.edu

J. P. Michaud
Integrated Pest Management - Entomology
Agricultural Research Center - Hays, KS
Phone: (785) 625-3425
e-mail: jpmi@ksu.edu



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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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