

Fact Sheet

Managing flies after flooding



Fly numbers can increase after flooding or heavy rain events because of the excess amounts of spoiled food and other waste. Flies are not only a nuisance but can transport germs causing illnesses such as gastroenteritis.

Flies are a common flying insect pest which can cause nuisance both indoors and outdoors and are widespread throughout Australia. There are many kinds of flies; the most common types are the housefly, the bushfly, and the blowfly. More information is available in the publication '[Arthropod pests of public health significance in Australia](#)'.

Flies usually appear in spring and persist during summer and into autumn. Adult flies can live for up to four weeks and are generally more active during daylight hours.

The fly life cycle

Adult flies lay their eggs in decaying organic matter including rubbish and food scraps, open septic tanks and drains, grass clippings, compost heaps, rotting fruit and vegetable matter, animal faeces (droppings) and dead animals. After a few hours the eggs turn into larvae, called maggots. The maggots feed on the organic material and grow quickly.

After four to five days the maggots move to dry soil, burrow down into it, and turn into pupae. Pupae are brown to black in colour and can sometimes be mistaken for mice droppings. After four or five days, pupae turn into adult flies. They break out of the pupal case, burrow up through the soil to the surface and fly away.

Flies can travel many kilometres from their breeding place. However, if there are lots of flies around, it usually means there is a good breeding place nearby.

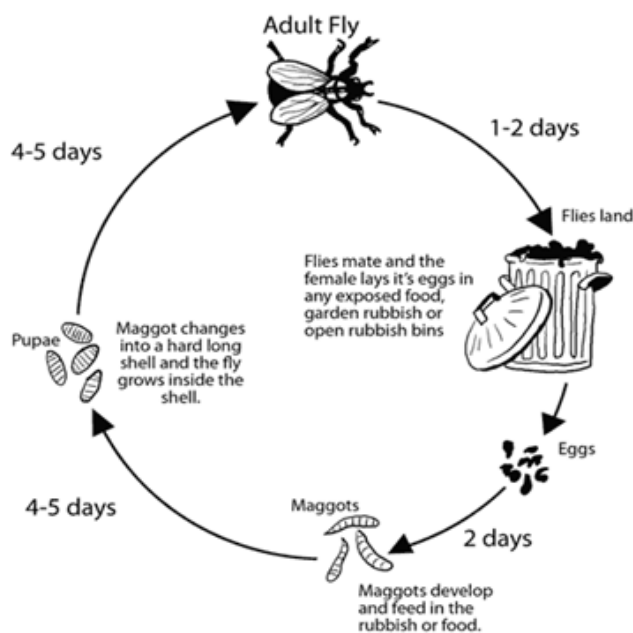


Fig 1: [The fly life cycle](#)



Flies and illness

Flies can be a nuisance during the warmer months. Flies common to South Australia do not bite humans, but when they land on things like food scraps, rubbish, or animal droppings they pick up disease-causing germs. The germs are carried on their bodies and legs and in their stomachs.

When flies land on people, their food or on benchtops, cups, knives and plates the germs can be passed on to these items. Then, when people eat this food or use these items, the germs can enter their bodies and cause illness. Flies can transmit germs including bacteria such as *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, viruses, and parasites.

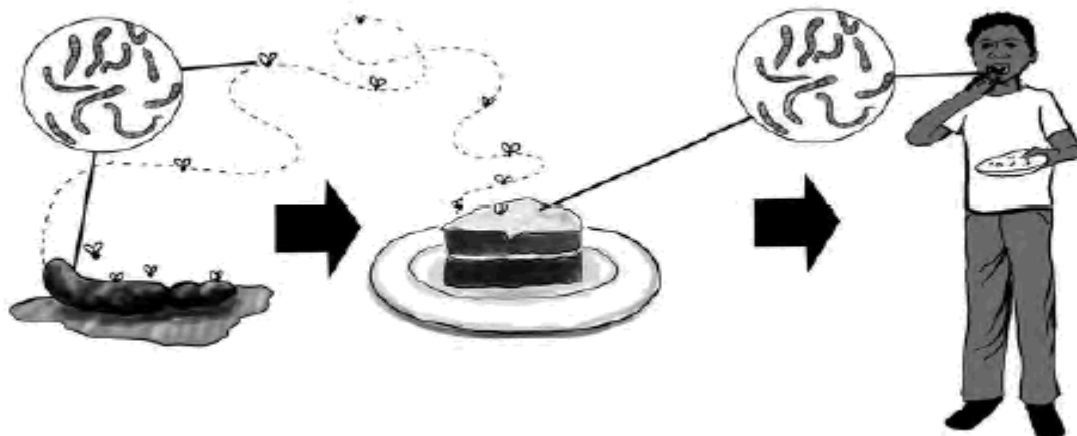


Fig 2: How flies spread germs which cause illness

Controlling flies

Regularly checking your property for possible fly breeding will help reduce the number of flies and the likelihood of illness. Some of the ways to eliminate breeding materials around the home include:

- > removing rubbish, animal droppings, and organic waste such as food scraps and accumulations of rotting fruits and vegetables as soon as possible.
- > sealing all rubbish, food scraps and organic matter in plastic bags for disposal.
- > ensuring rubbish bins have undamaged, tight-fitting lids.
- > emptying bins regularly and keeping them clean.
- > keeping toilets clean and maintained, and ensuring vent pipes are fly-proofed.
- > making sure septic tanks and wastewater soakage areas are not damaged.

If maggots are found, they should be killed immediately (using an appropriate insecticide) and the breeding site cleared of all organic material. If the organic material cannot be moved immediately (e.g., compost heaps), consider covering, screening, or digging it into the ground to prevent fly access. The use of a residual pesticide will provide temporary control.

It is also important to maintain good hygiene standards in the home by:

- > thoroughly cleaning food preparation areas and keeping food covered.
- > checking for holes around doors and windows and using fly screens.
- > using other appropriate pest control measures including the use of fly swats, traps, baits, sticky tapes, insecticides, and electrocuting grids.

In industrial or commercial areas, particularly where food is prepared, air curtains or plastic strip curtains on doorways provide effective barriers against fly movement.

Chemical control

Adult flies in the home are mainly controlled with widely available insecticides, especially aerosol sprays.

Automatic spray systems are available that attach to the wall and periodically release small amounts of insecticides (e.g., synthetic pyrethroids), but these are more appropriate for commercial premises.

Residual insecticides can be sprayed on areas where flies like to rest, such as fences, shrubs, rubbish bins, onto screens and around doors and windows.

Pest strips containing an insecticide (dichlorvos) can be placed in outdoor or non-habitable areas such as bins or storage spaces to prevent flies from breeding.

Insecticides are only effective if suitable fly breeding materials are eliminated and must always be used according to their label.

Further advice

Contact an environmental health officer at your local council.

For more information

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