



WHAT EVERY CATTLEMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BUFFALO FLY!

1. The Buffalo fly is a blood-sucking fly with the scientific name of *Haematobia irritans exigua*. A closely related species in the Americas is called the Horn fly, *Haematobia irritans irritans*. The major biological difference between the two, is that Horn flies can overwinter and therefore appear earlier in the spring.
2. The Buffalo fly life cycle can be completed in as little as 18 days during the Northern Australian summer. Approximately 6 days of the cycle are spent as larvae feeding in the dung pads of cattle, and 7 days as pupae in the soil adjacent to the dung pad.
3. The adult female Buffalo fly can survive for up to 3 weeks under optimum conditions during which period it can lay up to 12-15 egg batches, each containing 20-25 eggs, a total of up to 375 progeny per female.
4. Adult flies feed up to 30 times a day on an animal taking a small quantity of blood each time. Some animals can carry upwards of 5000 flies. The tolerance of animals to fly burdens varies between individuals. Generally bulls, steers and barren cows tend to be more active, indicating hormonal influence.
5. When there are large numbers of flies feeding on an animal, the animal's heart rate, respiration and urinary output are increased. The irritation caused reduces the animal's feed intake and results in significant weight loss. Scientific experiments undertaken on the economic effect of Horn flies indicate that a growing animal can lose approx. 1.6kgs in body weight per week when suffering high population of flies. Preliminary studies in Australia on Buffalo fly support this data. In a trial carried out by XCS Consultants, liveweight gain in fly-free cattle was almost 20% compared with conventionally treated cattle which gained only 8% over the same 4-month period.
6. The adult fly transmits a microfilarial parasite called *Stephanofilaria* from animal to animal. These nematodes live in their hair follicle and cause the characteristic lesions that some people mistakenly attribute to the irritation caused by the bites of the fly.
7. Buffalo fly like Horn fly is capable of developing resistance to commonly used insecticides, especially when those insecticides are used incorrectly by under-dosing or over-dosing hence the importance of following the Y – Tex 3 WAY Insecticidal Cattle Ear Tag Rotation Strategy.

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