



# Control options to protect you and your animals from stable fly



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Since the early 1900's, stable fly has become firmly established on the Swan Coastal Plain, and while control measures can significantly reduce numbers, complete eradication is not considered achievable — meaning some stable flies will always remain.

The best way you can limit the impact of stable flies on yourself, your animals and community is to maintain regular hygiene practices on your property by removing or treating all organic waste material.



**Biting flies cause pain and distress to animals**

## Step 1: Stop stable fly breeding on your property

Take the steps to reduce the number of breeding sites on your property by following the best practice measures in our [community information sheet](#) or [vegetable grower management strategies document](#).

If you have implemented the best practice measures into your clean up routine and continue to experience problems with stable flies, please report any infestations to your Local Government Authority (LGA).

Managing stable fly is a shared effort between the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), the community, and local governments in areas where stable fly is a declared pest.

The department encourages all LGAs included in the Stable Fly Management Plan to participate in this shared approach to protect their community and animals. Please report directly to your LGA, but note that action depends on your local government's involvement.

The strategies below may help to alleviate the problems caused by stable fly in cases where the source of stable fly breeding has not been identified or addressed.

## Step 2: Use traps, repellents and/or insecticides

Sticky traps, repellents and/or insecticides can be useful to lessen the impact of stable fly bites on yourself, family and animals.

Protective measures such as tassels and rugs may reduce the likelihood of horses being bitten.

### Chemical control

**Repellents** do not kill the flies but can stop them landing on and biting the host. Most repellents only last several hours, so they will need to be reapplied regularly.

Stable flies can also build up a tolerance to chemical control, so it is best to rotate the use of several repellents every day. In particular:

- animal bedding can be rinsed in a permethrin-based solution to deter the flies
- animal's ears can be protected by applying oil-based creams or repellents such as Vaseline, Nature's Botanical Crème (contains rosemary and cedarwood oils). These are effective to deter stable flies, but regular reapplication is needed to be effective.



**Insecticides** are designed to kill the stable fly and include animal backline pour-ons (backline drenches), residual sprays and insecticide-impregnated ear tags for livestock.

If treating livestock with insecticide, application to the lower legs and underbelly of the animals is critical. Only use appropriate products approved for use by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

You can also apply residual sprays to surfaces used by stable flies when they are resting (e.g. shady surfaces, fences, walls)

See [approved chemical products for stable fly control \(as at November 2025\)](#).

## Traps

Ordinary protein-based traps **do not** attract stable fly but are effective against houseflies, blowflies and bushflies.

Commercial or home-made sticky fly traps can help to reduce fly numbers in local situations. White boards with a sticky surface will attract them, as they are likely to rest on a cool, vertical surface after a blood meal.

Alternatively, cloth target treated traps can be used. This is a white cloth soaked in insecticide that attracts, then kills stable flies. These traps can be effective for up to 3 months, particularly if the cloth is kept dry and taut between the 2 posts, however rain, high temperatures and sunlight reduce the residual effect to only 1 to 2 weeks.



**Homemade sticky fly trap**

Make your own stable fly traps by following the simple steps in our [information sheet](#).

### Commercial sticky traps

You can also purchase refillable commercial sticky traps for biting flies. Ask at your local produce store or do an internet search. Not all US suppliers may ship to Australia, so check first.

Small, commercial traps are easy to handle and dispose of when full of flies. Examples include Farnam Bite Free Stable Fly Trap, Starbar Bite Free Stable Fly Trap and EZ Sticky Fly Trap.

- 'Olson Traps' consist of an alsynite cylinder covered with a disposable, sticky clear film. The traps (cylinder plus stake plus 2 sticky sleeves) are available with 10 replacement sticky films.
- Aeroxon Barn & Stable Fly Catcher is a large roll of sticky tape (20 cm x 1 m) for hanging in barns, stables and kennels (available from biconet.com)
- 7 m flycatcher sticky rolls

Fasten the trap to a fence post or a stake pushed into the ground.

Remove and replace the films when covered with stable flies and/or dust.

**Help protect our community and animals – managing organic waste is crucial to stop stable fly from breeding.**

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