

# Proactive fly control

\* Chemicals are often used to control flies, but the answer to livestock farmers' fly problems can also have six legs and wings.

Fly parasites are a more unusual method of fly control, tackling the pest before they become airborne.

Fly parasites work by burrowing into the pupae of unhatched botflies and eating them before they hatch, which lowers fly numbers on farm.

Jess Charlton of Lambert Leonard and May vets says the fly parasite pupae, which live for the normal fly season length and can overwinter, should be sprinkled round the farm every fortnight. They hatch out soon

after to keep the numbers of fly parasites topped up.

She says: "You need to carefully target where to spread them – for example, muck heaps, areas of moist material, general mucky areas and loose housing. Cover any areas flies will use for breeding.

"But you can't put them where tractors or cows will crush them, so put them out of the way under water troughs," she adds.

Farmers can start using them anytime throughout the fly season, but it is most effective to start early, before too many flies are about and have had the chance to breed, says Miss Charlton.

However, she warns some farms see better success than others.

"If there is a lot of concrete or slats,

the flies don't have as many places to breed, whereas they work well on smaller farms with muck heaps that have been there a while and are more prone to fly problems."

Each bag, costing £48, contains about 50,000 pupae. Farmers should use one bag for every 100 cows.

The fly parasites are recommended for use with other products and Miss Charlton says they are often used in conjunction with a pour-on or spot-on.

"Use a combined approach and hit them hard," she says.

The fly parasites permitted by Defra and English Nature for use in the UK are two species of indigenous wasp – *Muscidifurax raptor* and *Spalangia cameroni* – which seek out and kill developing flies.



Spot-on and pour-on products can be used together with parasitic wasps