

## **Plan now for summer: your summer fly control strategy for beef cattle**

As temperatures begin to warm up this spring, you may begin to notice an increase in insect populations. Now is a good time to consider what fly control measures you may want to put into practice for your cow herd.

Flies are irritating to cattle, and cause loss in performance and weight gain. Fortunately for farmers and ranchers, there are a variety of options for fly control. You can select from pour-on insect control measures, foggers, ear tags, and insecticides in livestock feed. It is easy to find an option that will work well in your own farming or ranching operation.

Foggers are a good way to regularly get close to your cattle, and get them accustomed to human interaction. Pour-on insect control works well if you also need to control lice. Ear tags and feed products are popular options. These choices are popular on many farms and ranches, but there are some considerations to be made when choosing either of these two options.

With ear tags, it's very important to choose a tag with a different active ingredient, each year. Continually using the same ear tags will quickly cause resistance in localized fly populations. When working cattle during the fall, it is very important to remove the old fly control ear tags, and dispose of them in a closed container. Leaving old tags laying around, or in your cow's ears, may also cause long term resistance issues.

With feed through insecticides (products mixed directly in feed or mineral mixes), you need to be able to begin feeding before flies become a problem. Also, you need to be able to feed these products consistently throughout the season. Inconsistent feeding patterns, or using feed through products after the occurrence of high fly populations, will decrease their effectiveness.

This summer, K-State Research and Extension will begin year three of a research project to determine if all-natural spice products included in livestock mineral have effective fly control properties. This ongoing project is taking place at the Kansas State University Bressner Pasture, located in the Southwind Extension District near Yates Center, Kansas. These proprietarial spice mixes often include things like garlic, cloves or cinnamon. It will be exciting to see if these mineral products can be successfully included into a farmer or ranchers fly control tool box!