

## Fact Sheet

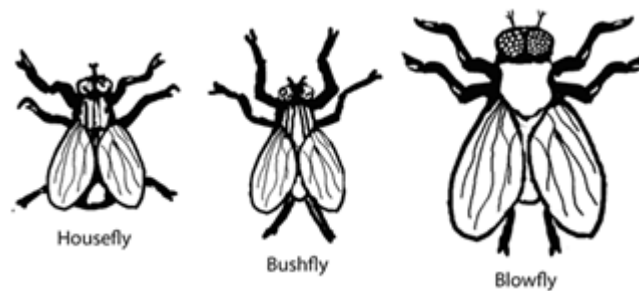
# Managing flies after flooding



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 pest which can cause nuisance both indoors and outdoors, and are widespread throughout Australia. There are many different kinds of flies; the most common types are the housefly, the bushfly and the blowfly.

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.



**Fig. 1.0: Common types of flies**

Source: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch5-ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch5.3>

## Fly life cycle

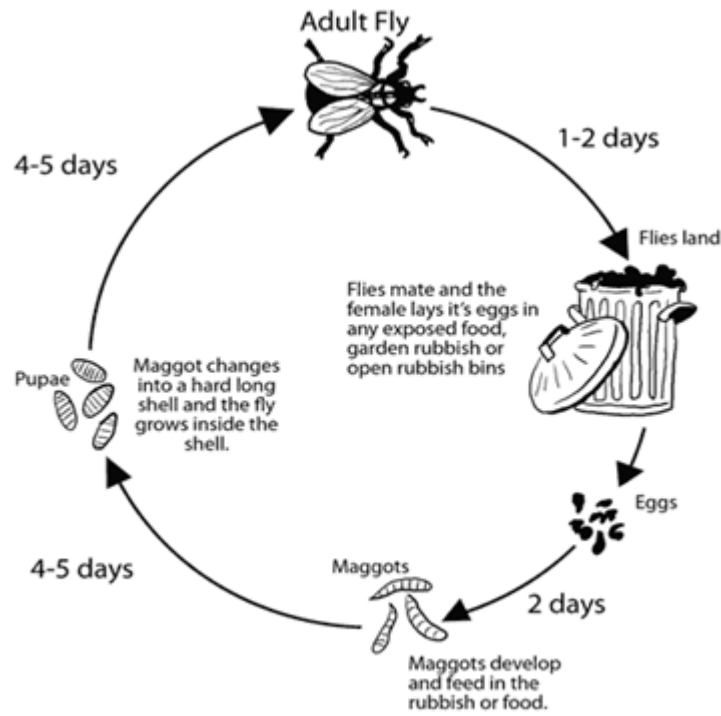
Adult flies lay their eggs in decaying organic matter including rubbish and food scraps, open septic tanks and drains, grass clippings, compost heaps, rotting fruit and vegetable matter, animal faeces (droppings) and dead animals. After a few hours the eggs turn into larvae, called maggots. The maggots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

After four or 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 are able to 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.



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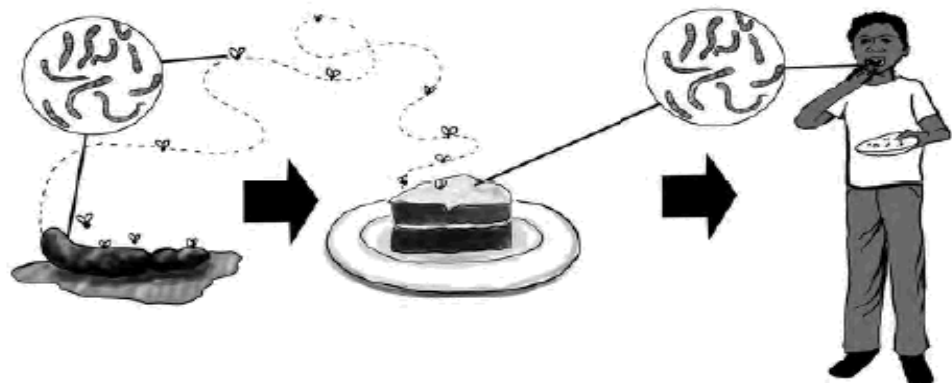
**Fig. 2.0** Life cycle of the fly

Source: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch5-ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch5.3>

## 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 then eat the 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. 3.0:** How flies spread germs which cause illness

Source: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch5-ohp-enhealth-manual-atsi-cnt-l-ch5.3>



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## 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 are:

- > Remove rubbish, animal droppings, and organic waste such as food scraps and accumulations of rotting fruits and vegetables as soon as possible.
- > Seal all rubbish, food scraps and organic matter in plastic bags for disposal.
- > Ensure rubbish bins have undamaged, tight-fitting lids.
- > Empty bins regularly and keep them clean.
- > Keep toilets clean and maintained, and ensure vent pipes are fly-proofed.
- > Make sure septic tanks and leach drains are not damaged and have proper sealed lids.

If maggots are found they should be killed immediately (e.g. using an 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:

- > Thoroughly clean food preparation areas and keep food covered
- > Check for holes around doors and windows and use fly screens wherever possible
- > Use fly swats, traps, baits, sticky tapes or electrocuting grids to control flies
- > Use insecticides to control flies if necessary.

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, or call Health Protection Programs on 8226 7100.

## For more information

**Health Protection Programs  
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ADELAIDE SA 5000**  
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