

- Speaker 1: [00:00](#) Welcome to the old fashioned on purpose podcasts. It's fly season y'all and it is one of my least favorite things about living on a homestead. They are everywhere, they're relentless and they're not going away any time soon. In today's episode, I'm diving into four natural fly control strategies for your homestead, whether it's big or small. And if you listen until the end, you'll also hear me share my dirty little secret of what I have in my kitchen that I usually hide before company comes over. I'm your host Jill winger and for the last 10 years I've been helping people just like you who feel uninspired by modern life, I'll teach you how to leave the rat race and create the life you really want by growing your own food and mastering old fashioned skills.
- Speaker 1: [01:06](#) So we've had a weird spring slash summer still feels like spring because we're having a lot of rain and cooler weather. So our flies are a little bit delayed, but they're coming and I've seen them sticking to my horses legs and they're starting to buzz around my house and try to dive bomb our food. So I know that the war has begun, and if you live on a homestead or even if you've ever just been to a farm with animals, you know that flies are really just a fact of life. They come with a territory, and while I don't think there's a way to completely eliminate them from homestead living, there are some things you can do to diminish their power without relying on nasty chemicals or pesticides that potentially could harm beneficial insects or even your family. So in this episode we're going to dive into my four favorite natural fly control strategies.
- Speaker 1: [02:13](#) Let's get started. Okay, so number one, this one's a really cool strategy. I'm not going to say this is kind of weird to say. I'm not going to say that I have a hundred percent proof of how exactly it works, but for the minimal investment it requires in the fact that it's really natural, I think it's a pretty cool option, or at least fun to try. And this is drum roll, please, Fly predators. And if you've never heard of fly predators, they're like a parasitic fly. So basically you're fighting the bad bugs, Aka flies with good bugs, Aka predators. And I really like this concept because it controls flies before they ever hatch and doesn't require any sprays or chemicals to do so. In a nutshell, fly predators are actually parasitic wasps and they are a natural enemies of flies, but they don't bother people or animals.
- Speaker 1: [03:20](#) And they work by actually laying their eggs in fly PUPA. So in, you know, they kind of start or they stop the process before it starts. They eliminate the flies before they ever have a chance to hatch. Now according to some information I found on the organic agriculture center of Canada, and I quote, parasitic

wasps can remove, excuse me, parasitic wasps can contribute to 50% less flies when used in combination with adequate manure removal, end quote. So they're not going to necessarily get rid of every fly you have, but they should reduce it considerably. Now it's kind of crazy how to use these guys, so you have to mail order them. I get mine from a place called Spalding labs. They have this really cool calculator tool on their website that helps you to figure out how many fly predators you need based on how many animals you have.

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So I'll drop a link to Spaulding labs in the show notes, but you order some predators and they ship them to you in this little baggy. And most of them are, this looks like little cocoons and they come in this bag of shavings and you'll just let the bag sit sealed up for a few days until the little predators start to hatch. And they just look like little tiny flies and they're crawling around in the bag really crazy. And then once they start hatching, you open the bag and you sprinkle them around in key spots around your barn yard. So the manure piles, like I would always put it near our big compost pile. I would put it in the corners where there was a manure buildup cause the animals would, you know, go and stand there all the time. And then the adult predators will feast on the Pupa of the flies that you don't want and you in turn get a fly relief program that doesn't require pesticides.

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So that's pretty cool. One little caveat. Chickens do like to eat the Predator pupa. So try to put them in an area where your chickens don't have easy access cause it's a pretty pricey chicken snack if that's all they're good for. Now if you want to try predators and you know it's mid summer or late summer where you live, you might need to wait until next year. It's best if you can start releasing them early in the season and then you just do a few more releases throughout the summer. The cool thing with Spalding is they will time it for you and if you want, when you order, you can specify when the different shipments go out. So there just show up in your mailbox throughout the summer. And again, it's pretty hard to know exactly how the predators, how effective they are because I can't exactly go count how many flies I had last year and how many flies I had this year.

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So there's a little bit of a gray area, but I figure for the, the cost, which is pretty low, it's gotta provide some benefit. And I just like knowing it's an option that I can use that doesn't require spraying. Okay. Strategy number two is not quite as exciting as flight predators. It's a little more work. And that is manure management. It's a simple equation. Less manure equals fewer

flies. And we know that manure is just a fact of life when you have animals. So what we do with it is key. Flies adore Poop, plain and simple, especially the wet stuff. So do whatever you can to remove it or reduce it in your barn yard. Here's how we do this and we're not perfect at it, but we try. Of course regular barn or pen cleaning is going to be a huge help in reducing your flight numbers and then mount the manure that you clean out of your barns or pens into a large enough pile, far enough away from the barn that it can heat up and start that composting process.

Speaker 1: [07:45](#) As that manure or compost will heat it makes it a less hospitable spot for flies to lay eggs and also gives you that gorgeous compost that you can use in your garden. You can also spread your manure or compost in a thin layer in your pasture. We usually borrow a manure spreader to do this. You know, we use a lot of the compost in the garden. We usually have way more than we need. So spreading it out ensures that we're not giving any sort of breeding ground for flies. And it also helps to fertilize the grass. And then lastly, if you have a lot of pasture ground dragging your pasture, and we do this with a tractor, we do not do this by hands, but dragging the pasture breaks up the manure piles that are out there, dries them out and helps reduce places for flies to lay eggs.

Speaker 1: [08:41](#) So again, none of those things will be a foolproof method to reduce every fly you've ever had. But working together you can kind of create a program that will make your property less hospitable for those flies. Okay, strategy number three, homemade fly spray. Now this isn't going to necessarily reduce the numbers of flies you have, but it can help give your animals some relief because in the late summer around here, all of our animals just are plain miserable as they attempt to fight the flies. And that's when I break out my DIY fly sprays and use them liberally. I'll do this when I like number one, milk the cow in the morning, I'll give her a good spray down. I do it when I'm working with my horses, you know, riding them or out in the pasture with them. And when I think of it and I have my bottle with me, I spray them down as much as possible.

Speaker 1: [09:43](#) You can definitely buy fly sprays at the feed store that are effective. I personally don't love those as much because of the pesticides they contain, especially when it comes to my milk cow, you know, I spray her with fly spray, there's kind of a cloud of spray that lingers around her and then I get under her to milk and that cloud is kind of wafting into my bucket of milk. Just don't love the thought of that. And even when I spray my horses, the wind will always blow some in your face or get in

your mouth. You can always taste it. So I just don't really love the thought of eating the pesticides. I prefer it a homemade more natural option instead. I've actually tried a number of DIY recipes over the years for fly spray, but I found that a mixture of water, vinegar and essential oils are actually my favorite.

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And I have a recipe that has specific amounts for this and you can grab that for free. In my essential homestead ebook, I'm going to link that in the show notes so you can grab it. But in a nutshell, what I'll do is take a quart size spray bottle, fill it half full with vinegar, apple cider or white vinegar. Either one will work and fill it the rest of the way with water. I then add usually between 60 and 80 drops of essential oil. It sounds like a lot, but I found that you really need to make a higher concentration of oils in this mixture because you know it's mixed in four cups of water. We're spraying it on an animal with for some of it's going to float away and so we really want to have a good amount of oils in there so they can do their job.

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You can really get creative with the oils that you use in this mixture. I have found that the more herbaceous oils seem to work the best. So things like basil, thyme, Rosemary, Eucalyptus, or Melaleuca, all work really well. You could also throw in some lavender just so it doesn't smell quite so strong. Those herbaceous ones are pretty potent. The one I would caution you to be a little bit careful of is peppermint because even though peppermint does a great job of repelling insects, I've noticed it really can make my animals a little bit, uh, nervous or high-strung. It has a tendency to wake up humans as well, which is good. But when I'm working with a horse, I really don't necessarily want them to be feeling a super, you know, frazzled or energetic. And I've noticed that peppermint can really kind of upset my horses on occasion. The milk cow, not so much, she's pretty calm, but if you have higher strong animals who are more sensitive, I probably would skip adding the peppermint into your fly sprays.

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Okay. My last strategy for dealing with flies, the natural way is to trap them. So flight traps and yes, indeed, those lovely little golden sticky tape strips are amazingly effective, especially when you're trying to reduce flies in a small area such as a barn or a chicken coop or your house. And you know, that dirty little secret I referenced at the beginning of the show. Well I always have a fly strip hanging in my kitchen in the summer. Usually I tape it to my pendant lights, that hang over my kitchen islands, and it will be filled usually within 24 hours. I do have to be very careful not to get it stuck in my hair while I'm cooking. That has happened more times than I care to recount. But it is a huge

game changer to help the flies get out of my house. And you know, whether or not I take it down before company comes over, just depends on how well I know you.

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If we're BFFS it'll probably be hanging there when you arrive. It's a just what we have to do to survive in the summer here on the homestead. Even though they're not super fun to look at, fly strips are really effective and they're dirt cheap. You can grab them on Amazon, but you'll probably find them for even better prices at your local feed store, hang them from your ceiling, hang them from a window and change them often cause they're gonna fill up fast. You can also make your own fly traps or grab pretty cheap plastic fly traps at the local feed stores. I have a link on my blog of how to make your own trap that I will share in the show notes, but it just uses an old pot bottle that you cut and flip the top upside down and it makes a little bit of a funnel to trap the flies inside.

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I like to fill my traps with a mixture of water in something a little bit sweet and a little bit rotten. So get some banana or watermelon that is past its prime. Let it float in that water and the flies will not be able to resist. None of these things are going to be a quick fix solution like I stated before, but those are just a few of my best strategies for fighting the war on flies in the summer. Depending on your area or what sort of animals you have, you'll likely develop your own plan over the years as you figure out what does and doesn't work for you, may the odds be ever in your favor as you battle the bugs this year, and that's it. My friends, thanks so much for listening. If you have a minute, I would be so honored to have you subscribe and leave a quick review over on iTunes so more people can find this podcast and bringing the old fashion on purpose mindset into their lives. I'll catch up with you next time. Happy homesteading.