

LET'S TALK FLY CONTROL

BICENTENNIAL VERMONT DAIRY OPERATION RELIES ON CLARIFLY® LARVICIDE



Dairy operation managers understand the importance of maintaining their cows' comfort and health, which promotes consistent milk production and profits for the farm. Ballard Acres dairy farm of Georgia, Vt. was founded in 1788 and has remained a viable family farm for more than two centuries. One strategy for success is to consistently implement a comprehensive fly management program to ensure that its herd is productive and profitable. The farm has used various products to combat the nuisance flies common to dairy farms such as house flies, stable flies, horn flies and face flies. However, no product has yielded greater success than ClariFly® Larvicide from Central Life Sciences.

"Before we started using ClariFly Larvicide at Ballard Acres, we tried a few other products that claimed to offer reliable fly protection, but we were still seeing large amounts of flies on the cattle and in the barn," said Grady Ballard, seventh generation at Ballard Acres.

Heavy populations of flies can negatively affect the health and performance of dairy cattle, while also being a nuisance to farmers and surrounding neighbors. The stable fly (*Stomoxys calcitrans*) feeds on blood with piercing mouthparts penetrating the skin of both animal and human hosts. The horn fly (*Haematobia irritans*), on the other hand, is a small biting fly that also uses piercing mouthparts to take up to 40 blood meals a day while congregating on the backs of cattle.

Ballard Acres was first introduced to ClariFly® Larvicide in 2008 when the operation took part in a study conducted by the William H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute. The objective of the study was to determine the effectiveness of ClariFly® Larvicide on fly populations on dairy farms when included in feeds as compared to use of conventional fly control methods. During the trial period, no other fly control methods were used.

Katie Ballard, Director of Research at the Miner Institute, commented, "I was glad our farm was able to be part of the study the Miner Institute conducted to evaluate the efficacy of ClariFly. Of course as a scientist, my focus was on the data we collected from all of the farms that participated in the study, which found that farms that used ClariFly as the primary fly abatement system had a significant reduction in fly pressure compared to farms that used other means of fly control."

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Grady Ballard echoed this observation, "We were quite impressed within the first two to three weeks with the results our farm was experiencing. The fly population was dramatically reduced and the cows and calves were no longer being bothered by nuisance flies."

ClariFly® Larvicide is a feed additive that disrupts the development of fly larvae and reduces the emergence of adult flies from the manure of treated animals. The active ingredient in ClariFly® Larvicide, diflubenzuron, prevents flies from properly forming exoskeletons during molting and results in death before they can become adult flies. This mode of action is different than conventional insecticides that attack the nervous system of adult insects.

Grady Ballard said, “Calf feeding is much more pleasant in the summertime for not only the calves, but for the calf feeders too, with few flies landing or biting our legs while we are doing chores in our calf barn.”

“Aside from what the data showed, what really meant more to me was my husband’s opinion of the product’s performance. Being someone who is not easy to convince, my husband recognized the effectiveness of ClariFly when after two weeks of feeding it, there were no fly maggots in places where ones usually developed. The fact that he still chooses to use ClariFly six years later certainly says a lot,” said Katie Ballard.

Ballard Acres enjoys the ease-of-use associated with ClariFly® Larvicide, receiving the product premixed in its feed. Grady Ballard starts with the feed containing ClariFly® Larvicide in April and will keep it in the feed until 30 days after the first frost of the year, in October or November. The Vermont dairy farm also purchases bags of ClariFly® Add-Pack to add to the whole milk fed to its heifer calves. Although ClariFly® Larvicide is the backbone of Ballard Acres’ integrated pest management (IPM) program for fly control, the dairy operation also practices well-rounded fly control protocols by applying a pour-on product to pasture cows and using a fly repellent fogger in the calf barn.

Grady Ballard and his staff used to apply the fly repellent fogger almost every day to ensure cow comfort, but have reduced the number to once or twice a week since incorporating ClariFly® Larvicide into its feed.

“Our cows just seem a whole lot more comfortable and happy, that’s for sure,” said Grady Ballard. “We are saving money and time because there is less feed being thrown and wasted on the ground and we don’t need to source added labor since ClariFly comes

already premixed into the herd’s feed.” Grady Ballard added that the pricing of ClariFly® Larvicide is competitive enough that his facility can use this high quality product and be profitable in its operations at the same time.

Reducing fly populations on dairy farms not only increases cow comfort, but also drastically reduces the spread of disease pathogens. The house fly (*Musca domestica*) feeds on animal waste and garbage and has been implicated in the transmission of 65 disease organisms, including the bacteria that cause mastitis, which can spread among animals and inflict severe economic damage.

The face fly (*Musca autumnalis*) is primarily considered a pastured cattle pest and feeds on secretion around the eyes, nose and mouth of cattle, making the pest an excellent vector for eye diseases. Face flies have been linked to the spread of infectious bovine pinkeye, with associated costs from decreased weight gain, reduced milk production and treatment estimated to be \$150 million annually in the U.S. alone.

“Our dairy saw quite a bit of pinkeye outbreaks before we started using ClariFly,” said Grady Ballard. “But a few weeks after we had it premixed into our feed and added it to our milk replacer we saw a dramatic decrease in pinkeye throughout the entire herd and hardly see any cows with it anymore.” Since the implementation of ClariFly® Larvicide into its IPM program, Ballard Acres’ herd is no longer experiencing intense agitated behavior from fly pressure, allowing the animals to remain comfortable and produce more milk.

Grady Ballard said, “Honestly, our cattle’s comfort and productivity seem to get better each year we use ClariFly Larvicide. We definitely have not experienced any resistance issues with the product and wouldn’t trust our 400-head dairy operation to any other fly control product!”

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