Other Fly Control Methods

We are not suggesting that all other methods of fly control are totally useless. In fact, some other units may work well in particular circumstances. For example, in the milking parlor, where all cattle are of a similar height, the mop oiler may be used effectively. More complex equipment, such as automatic proximity sprayers, may also be appropriate for other large operations.

However, the mainstay of the beef industry has been the dust bag and cattle rub. Over the years, we have used both on our farm. They are better than nothing at all. However, we were not satisfied with their overall effectiveness. For example, when the rope rub is hung high enough to prevent large animals from attempting to jump over the unit, the smaller calves tend to duck under the ends of the rub. Studies show that the weight gain of calves is particularly affected by flies. Furthermore, while the younger, vulnerable animals were not being adequately treated, several older cows actually rubbed the diesel soaked material until their hide became visibly irritated. As a solvent, diesel fuel is an irritant to cattle hide and it has a higher evaporation rate than mineral oil. One manufacturer boasts of the economy of their rope rub and then, instructs operators to frequently charge the unit with four gallons of diesel fuel mixture. Frankly, diesel fuel is not cheap anymore and enough insecticide concentration to mix an adequate strength with several gallons of dilution will obviously be much more expensive than the pint which is used in the CowBuddy® fly control system. A cheap fly control unit with an expensive operational cost is expensive over time.

Of course, the dust bag is less expensive to operate. However, moisture may cause the dust to solidify and reduce its effectiveness. Again, the younger animals may not be adequately treated, because the dust bag has a limited height range. Remember, if you are still losing money to the flies through weight loss and/or feed conversion loss, an inexpensive fly control device with limited effectiveness could actually be much more expensive in lost income.

Insecticide bearing ear tags were developed largely in response to the limited effectiveness and obvious limitations of these previous methods. However, the effectiveness of the ear tag has been widely questioned. Flies tend to develop resistance to the insecticide, because the dilution rate is extremely low. Furthermore, the piecing of the ear is stressful to the cattle, labor intensive, and exposes the animal to infection. It is recommended that old ear tags be removed to avoid the increase of resistance fly populations.

Flies are more than a minor aggravation. We have a serious problem with flies, more than $800,000,000 is lost each year in the U.S. beef industry. The CowBuddy® did not begin as a manufacturing business. It was originally designed for use on our farm to be a satisfactory way to control flies with minimum labor and little stress to the cattle. We wanted a system that was simple, effective, and durable. When other folks saw the unit and its performance, they wanted one. We were encouraged by ag teachers, farmers, veterinarians, business people, and many friends to give the unit a name and make it available to the public. With the very first CowBuddy®, effectiveness and quality construction were the main concerns. That's the way they are still made and why we can truly say that the CowBuddy® is made to work and made to last.