

Yellow Flies

Drafted by AMCD for public use

What are they?

Yellow flies are a large bodied biting fly related to deer flies and horse flies. They are typically $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to just under $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in size; this is the same as deer flies. As their name suggests, they have a distinct yellow flair to their appearance. As with most flies in this group, these are persistent and will follow people. This can give the illusion of a large group around you. Typically, there are just a few (except in rare seasonal outbreaks) and these few continuously attack you.



Image. Adult yellow fly, *Diachlorus ferrugatus* (Fabricius). Photograph by [Jerry Butler](#), University of Florida.

Where are they?

They stay in and near shaded woodland prone to flooding or that contains persistent water ways (rivers, creeks, ponds, storm water drainage). If it is cloudy or at dawn/dusk they may venture away from tree cover in absence of harsh sun.

Do they carry any diseases?

Some deer fly and horse fly relatives may vector bacteria. The common, and aggressive, yellow fly in Florida (*Diachlorus ferrugatus*) does not carry any disease causing agents. However, because the flies

break the skin with a scissor-like biting action, secondary infections by things like Staph infection can certainly occur. Different people have different tolerance to the bites. Many people may develop large swollen welts; rarely some get bleeding sores. Others only get pinkish discoloration and some skin sensitivity. As with mosquitoes, these flies inject saliva when they bite. Some people may develop an allergic response. If you are at all concerned about secondary infection, allergic reaction, or if you have damaged the bite wound through excessive scratching, consult your physician for advice.

BITES ALONE ARE NOT DIAGNOSABLE. Remember this when you talk to any expert for help, including your physician. You must explain the incident, and implicate the fly.

How do I protect myself?

Yellow flies do not pierce your skin like mosquitoes. They cannot bite through skin covering. Long sleeves and long pants strongly mitigate problems with the flies. These flies are also attracted to dark and contrasting colors. Some evidence also suggests an affinity for vibrant blue color.

There are too many!

Information courtesy of [South Walton Mosquito Control](#)

A trapping method homeowners can use, which does not involve the use of pesticides, is called the “sticky black ball” trap. Basically it is a beach ball, (milk jugs work just as well and are easier to hang) painted black and coated with a sticky substance. The sticky substance is called Tangle-Trap (or Tanglefoot) and comes in a spray or liquid applicator. It can be found at local hardware stores. These devices are hung from a tree limb using string, in a shaded area, about 4 feet above the ground. Movement of the ball by the wind attracts the flies, thinking it is an animal, they land, get stuck, and die on the ball. Several of these balls will reduce the local adult populations.

[CLICK HERE FOR VISUAL INSTRUCTIONS](#)

You can create your own “ball” using a milk jug, spray paint it a dark color and apply a sticky substance.

Remember: This trap is ATTRACTIVE to the flies. Put it somewhere away from your desired areas, but still near their hiding spots.

Vegetation management

Removing underbrush around a residence helps to eliminate resting sites for the flies and increases light levels, making the area less attractive.

Bite and sting relief

Here is a general purpose sting relief for yellow flies. It is also helpful for mosquito, chigger and jellyfish bites.

1 tsp. baking soda

1/3 cup ammonia (Windex is mostly ammonia)

1/3 tsp. papain (meat tenderizer)

1 crushed aspirin

Mix thoroughly and store in refrigerator (be sure to label container). When needed, shake well and apply with cotton swab, and rub briskly.

Thankfully, “yellow fly” season is relatively short, one maybe two months, and then mosquitoes become our major pest.

Other methods locals have used with some success: Witch hazel; Preparation H with aloe if put on bite immediately helps relieve itching and swelling; Cortisone cream.

Information courtesy [South Walton Mosquito Control](#).

For more in depth information on this fly group, visit the University of Florida’s [“Featured Creature”](#)