

Moth and Drain Flies

Diagnostic Lab Note

Phil Pellitteri- U.W. Insect Diagnostic Lab

Drain flies (family Psychodidae) are small fuzzy gnats (1.5-5mm) that can be found resting on walls in the home. Also called moth flies, sewer flies or filter flies these true flies have bodies and wings covered with numerous hairs. If crushed they leave a powdery smudge. When resting drain flies are delta shaped and are often found in areas of higher humidity. Adults can be found a moderate distance from the breeding site and are attracted to lights.



The maggots are found in damp, slimy environments that have a good source of organic matter. The most common source breeding site is floor drains and overflow cuts in sinks. Drain flies can breed in rotting vegetable material if enough moisture is present and in the gelatinous film or slime layer found under tiles and other areas that experience constant moisture and a source of organic matter. Generation time takes 1-4 weeks and adults live for 10-14 days.

Control

Finding the sources of breeding and eliminating them is the best control. Floor drains, overflow cuts in sinks and tubs, sump pump pits and sewers can accumulate organic matter but often do not receive enough water to flush the waste down the drain. The first step is often to try a very hot pail of water down the drain and try to clean and flush the pipe. Pouring bleach down the drain is not effective. In industrial settings a bacterial digester or other drain cleaners are often used to break up the sludge. Re-grouting tiles to prevent water seepage into walls will stop breeding in those sites. If found in rotting vegetable matter, the source should be destroyed. If adults do not disappear within a week further treatments or looking for other breeding sources is needed.