

# CASE STUDY

## A FOCUS ON FLY CONTROL TO MAINTAIN PERFORMANCE

*Lawrence Family Farm recaptured lost milk production by focusing on cow comfort*



**SHIELDSTRONG™**

Every spring, Matt Lawrence could see his cows becoming increasingly agitated. Flies emerged from the pistachio orchard next door and descended on his herd. Within a few days, the cows would be bunched together and away from the feed bunks and water troughs.

“I could see a whole swarm of cows turning, swatting tails and kicking those flies,” says Lawrence, owner of the Tulare, Calif., dairy. “Those flies really get after them. The worst affected were my two-year-old cows.”

Lawrence Dairy is a first-generation operation milking 1,800 Holstein, Jersey and crossbred cows. The operation prioritizes cow comfort to keep performance steady but struggled for years with fly control.

“Every spring, despite everything we’ve tried, we couldn’t get a leg up on the flies,” Lawrence recalls. “As a result, we lost quite a bit of milk — up to a gallon and a half.”

### SPRING AND SUMMER PEST PRESSURE

In previous years, Lawrence relied on a pest control contractor to spray the operation. While temporarily effective, the flies would come right back. He also tried spraying individual cows with backpack sprayers. However, that technique wouldn’t cut it with his increasing herd size.

**FLIES ARE MORE THAN JUST A NUISANCE TO CATTLE.**

**They increase stress while decreasing efficiency and milk production.<sup>1</sup>**



“My neighbors don’t spray and that kind of hurts my overall ability to maintain consistent control,” Lawrence explains. “After that, I tried some predator wasps. The first year of that was fairly effective. It takes quite a bit of work and upkeep.”

Trials on commercial dairy operations have not demonstrated substantial reduction in fly activity when using commercially available fly predators. In addition, conventional dairies must coordinate pesticide selection and application to ensure other beneficial insects are not inadvertently killed.<sup>1</sup>

Frustrated with his dipping milk production, Lawrence heard about an automated fly sprayer solution through his semen distribution company, Your Legacy Genetics.

“I was already using Specialty Sales’ HoofStrong® foot bath, so I asked about ShieldStrong™. I was ready for something new,” he says.

## SHIELDSTRONG SOLUTION

The ShieldStrong automated fly control system applies fly control product over the entire cow— not just the topline. Equipment is installed and maintained by Specialty Sales, LLC, including delivery and refills of either the water-based insecticide concentrate or the blend of fatty acids and mineral oil designed to repel flies.

ShieldStrong equipment features two or four nozzles with anti-drift functionality designed to precisely spray product. Sensors monitor when cows walk through the system, so it only sprays when cows are present, limiting waste and runoff and supporting environmental stewardship.

“We started on water early in the spring to let our cows get used to the system,” Lawrence says. “When we saw the flies, we turned on the insecticide, and it was immediately noticeable. Our dip in milk production didn’t happen this year. We were able to hold our peak well into the middle of June until the heat hit us hard. Even then, we only lost about a gallon and kept that half gallon we normally lost. We have flies now, but you can see them on the bunks and not on the cows.”



### \$360 MILLION PER YEAR

The U.S. dairy industry loses an estimated \$360 million per year due to productivity losses from flies.<sup>2</sup>



## MAKE FLY CONTROL EASY!

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#### References:

1 Payne, M. & Gerry, A. (2021). CDQAP Ruminations: Dairy Fly Control and Your Bottom Line. Accessed Aug. 5, 2024. Available at: <https://cdqap.org/ruminations/dairy-fly-control-and-your-bottom-line>.  
2 Taylor, D. B., Moon, R. D., & Mark, D. R. (2012). Economic impact of stable flies (Diptera: Muscidae) on dairy and beef cattle production. Journal of medical entomology, 49(1), 198–209.

  
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