

Early warning over stable fly

MILD winter conditions may lead to an earlier than expected influx of stable fly in Gingin, according to the Department of Agriculture and Food.

Department researcher Bob Paulin said decaying organic matter associated with vegetable harvesting would be the major source of stable fly.

Mr Paulin said vegetable crops with bulky harvest residues that took more than seven days to decompose presented the greatest risk because they helped complete the fly lifecycle.

"Stable fly breeds mainly in vegetable crop residues and raw manure," Mr Paulin said.

"It looks similar to a house fly and tends to come in large waves.

"To complete its lifecycle, stable fly needs to feed on fresh blood, mainly from cattle and horses.

"The fly is hard to swat and keeps on biting, so it is very annoying to humans. But horses and cattle are the real victims as they have little skin protection and cannot keep the pest at bay."

When stable fly is present in large numbers, animals lose condition due to repeated biting. In hot weather they can suffer severe heat stress when forced to herd together for protection.

Mr Paulin said in high risk situations, landholders were urged to spray vegetable residues with registered insecticides before mulching and incorporating into the soil.

He said the use of raw poultry manure was banned from September to May in local government areas affected by stable fly from Gingin to Bunbury.

After September 2011 it will be banned throughout the year in those areas.

"Managing fly breeding is an important responsibility to neighbours and other rural industries," Mr Paulin said.

"Failure to prevent breeding can leave people liable to prosecution."

He recommended people contact their council environmental health officer if they did not know if their area was affected.