

Humpbacked Flies

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Humpbacked flies (Fig. 1), or phorid flies, are very small flies easily recognized by their humpbacked appearance, flattened hind femora, and their wing venation. These flies are usually black but some species are yellowish brown. They have small heads which are somewhat flattened. Their wings display fairly heavy and distinctive veins on the leading edge while those remaining are weak and rather unnoticeable. Like all flies, when they have wings, but there is only one pair of forewings. The hindwings have become nothing but “knobs” for balancing flight. Some species are wingless. Humpbacked flies have a short nervous flight and are often observed running quickly over surfaces of foliage.

The habits of these flies are quite variable. Many develop as larvae (Fig. 2) in fungi, decayed plant tissue, decaying bodies (cadavers), and excrement. Some parasitize other insects such as bees, ants, and beetles, while others are known to parasitize snails. A few are known to feed in animal wounds, but these are rare for our area. Some occur as unwanted guests in ant or termite colonies.

Management

These flies are a curiosity or a nuisance and hardly qualify as a pest of humans or their “goods”. If humpbacked flies become a nuisance, the adults can be eliminated temporarily with an aerosol spray registered for such use (if they are indoors, make sure the label allows use of the product in an indoor environment). Follow pesticide label directions carefully. If the flies persist after repeated attempts to eliminate them, the larval breeding site likely exists nearby and needs to be located and eliminated if long-term control is desired. If all logical attempts fail then you may want to seek the help of a reputable exterminator.

References (and figures):

Borror, D.J. and D. M. DeLong, 1964, *An Introduction to the Study of Insects*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 810 pp.

Cole, F. R., 1969, *The Flies of North America*, U. of Calif. Press (Berkeley and Los Angeles). 693pp.

Peterson, A., 1971, *Larvae of Insects. Part II*. Edwards Brothers, Inc. Ann Arbor, MI, 416pp.



Fig 1. Adult humpbacked fly. By K. Grey.



Fig. 2 Larva of a humpbacked fly. By K. Grey.