

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

As I sat at my computer at The Imperial Republican, fruit flies broke my concentration. They buzzed me, dive bombing my keyboard.

I slapped at them.

Fruit flies were the main topic of conversation at our staff meeting last Friday. As anyone dropping in at the newspaper knows, we have a real problem. We've bug bombed, we've cider vinegar trapped, we've bug sprayed.

The fruit flies are still with us.

Fruit flies are also known as vinegar flies, according to Robert Tigner, Extension Educator for the UNL Extension Service in Chase County.

That's because they are attracted to the sour odor of fermentation and bacterial waste.

Fruit flies are mainly found on wet decaying plant matter or rotting fruit.

They can breed in drains or garbage disposals. Any spills of sodas, fruit juice, alcohol—anything sweet and sticky—can be feeding sources.

Food left in trash cans can be a breeding ground. Speaking of grounds, we at the Republican are now taking our coffee grounds right outside.

Recommendations from Tigner to eliminate the pesky flies include standing bleach in drains for awhile, cleaning out metal and plastic trash cans and eliminating foods out in the open.

Remove any rotten fruit or other attractive vegetation. Once all food and breeding places are cleaned, Tigner said, it can take three to four days to notice a real success with breaking the breeding cycle.

Other suggestions from the Extension web site include:

Caulking cracks and fitting door sweeps and screens, as the small flies only require tiny entry points;

Tight-fitting lids for compost, garbage cans and dumpsters;

Containers with tight-fitting lids for storing cans for recycling, after they've been well rinsed.

Breeding areas must be located and eliminated to get rid of fruit flies. If they're not, the problem will continue no matter how many insecticides are applied to control the adults.

If you want to murder the adults, however, as I do, you can build your own trap. Place a funnel rolled from a sheet of paper into a jar which is then baited with a few ounces of cider vinegar.

Place the traps wherever fruit flies are seen.

By the way, we considered taking a picture of one of our newspaper fruit flies to illustrate this story, but they're pretty quick, and we needed a really powerful camera lens. I can tell you that the adults have red eyes and are about one-eighth inch long.

Cheer up, though. Tigner said the peak fruit fly season is late summer and early fall. They can't live inside forever.

Or, can they?