

insect answers



HOVER OR SYRPHID FLIES

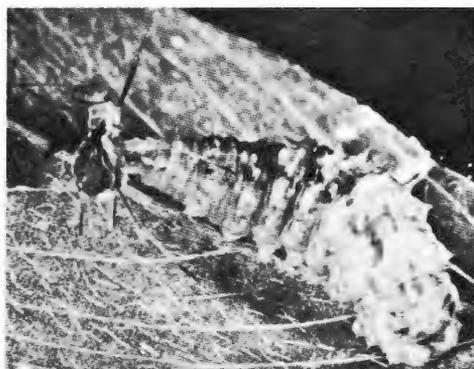
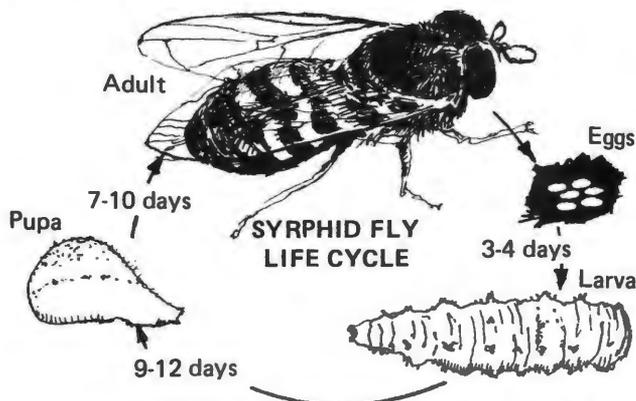
The most common species of syrphid flies in the Northwest are *Scaera pyrastri* and *Eupeodes volucris*. The adults are about 1/4-1/2 inch long, abdomen marked with yellow, black, or white bands. They fly swiftly and have a tendency to hover over fields where they are active. The adults are not predaceous but feed on pollen nectar and honeydew. Immature stages are sluglike, blind, rounded at the rear and pointed at the front end, usually brown or green with some whitish areas. Maximum length of the larvae is about 1/2 inch.

Life Cycle

The larvae pupate in the fall and spend the winter as pupae in the soil. Adults appear in late spring or early summer during the early buildup of various aphid species. They become abundant following heavy aphid buildups. Eggs are chalky white with faint longitudinal ridges; laid on leaves and stems in areas infested with aphids. From egg to adult usually requires about 16-28 days. Three to seven generations per year are possible, depending on weather and location.

Beneficial Effects

Syrphid or hover fly larvae feed on soft-bodied insects, particularly aphids. As many as 400 aphids may be destroyed by one larva during its developmental period. The larvae are considered effective aphid predators in many field and vegetable crops.



Syrphid fly maggot feeding on aphid.



Common syrphid fly resting on alfalfa flowers.

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