



botfly

botfly common name for several families of hairy flies whose larvae live as parasites within the bodies of mammals. The horse botfly secretes an irritating substance that is used to attach its eggs to the body hairs of a horse, mule, or donkey. When the animal licks off the irritant, the larvae are carried into the host's mouth and later migrate to the stomach. They attach themselves to the lining, where they feed until ready to pupate, and then drop to the ground with the feces. The larvae, which may cause serious damage to the digestive tract and weaken the animal, can be eliminated by a veterinarian. Sheep botflies lay their eggs in the nostrils of the host without alighting. The larvae work their way up into the head cavities causing fits of vertigo

known as blind staggers; failure to eat because of irritability may result in death. Old World species of this family attack camels, elephants, horses, mules, donkeys, and deer. The warble flies, also called heel flies, or bomb flies, parasitize cattle and other animals. The larvae, called cattle grubs or cattle maggots, penetrate the skin of the host immediately after hatching; they migrate through the flesh, causing irritability, loss of weight, and decreased milk production, and then settle under the skin of the back, producing cysts, or warbles. Breathing holes made in the warbles by the larvae damage the hide. A species of human botfly found in Central and South America attaches its eggs to a bloodsucking mosquito that it captures and then releases. When the mosquito comes in contact with humans or other warm-blooded animals, the fly eggs hatch and the larvae fasten to the mammal's skin. The larvae bore into muscle tissue; infestation is called myiasis. For control methods, see bulletins of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. The botflies are classified in the phylum Arthropoda , class Insecta, order Diptera. Horse botflies are classified in the family Gasterophilidae; sheep botflies and warble flies are classified in the family Oestridae; the human botfly is classified in the family Cuterebridae. .