



Houseflies - What job do houseflies do?

Fact

- Houseflies are scavengers. They eat scraps of food left around by other animals. Which, as part of the food chain, can be a good thing.
- Flies also lay their eggs in food scraps so that the newly hatched babies can have plenty to eat. Which can be a good thing because they'll help the composting process work.
- Houseflies are a good food supply for spiders. And that explains why spider webs are useful things to have in our house.
- But, houseflies can eat and lay their eggs in fresh food that you may have left lying around by accident.
- Houseflies can also spread diseases.

Do you know

- Houseflies spit on food to make it gooey and then they suck the spit and goop up.
- And when they spit on food, they can spit out bits of their last meal – imagine if the last thing they snacked on was a dead hedgehog!
- Flies have tiny hairs on their feet that are taste sensors - they use their hairy feet to taste things.
- If you like sweet food, you're a lot like a fly! Flies love sweet food. Sugar dissolves very easily so it's easy for flies to spit and suck up the sugar.
- Flies have a great sense of smell – they can smell rotting food from a great distance – and they love rotting food because it's easier for them to eat.

Experiments you can do

Study your household flies.

Are there places in your house or around your garden where flies like to hang out?

What things are in that place that would attract flies?

Wander into your kitchen now. Is there food lying out without being covered?

If there is maybe you could suggest that the food is covered before it gets smothered in fly spit and germs. (Fruit's not so bad because it has a skin you either peel or wash before you eat.)

Other Investigations

Think about the food chain. Are there other insects or animals that have a similar job to the housefly – they're scavengers that eat scraps left by other animals. Investigate - you'll be surprised.

Jokes

What happened to the fly when it fell into the butter? It turned into a Butterfly!

From Kate and Josh Steel.