

Flesh Fly



Flesh flies are common, conspicuous flies. This specimen measures about 12mm from head to tail. Flesh flies differ from the tachinid flies in that they lack the postscutellum, the large swelling underneath the scutellum on the thorax. Flesh flies have a prominent row of bristles (setae) on each side of the thorax just above the base of the hind leg in addition to another row of bristles just under the base of the wing. These two sets of bristles differentiate the flesh flies from the Muscid flies: they rarely have both sets. They most resemble blow flies, but are never metallic colored. They generally have highly contrasting black and grey stripes on the thorax, as well as a checkerboard-like pattern on the abdomen. Flesh flies also always have 4 rather than 2 or 3 bristles atop the thorax.

Most flesh flies breed in carrion, dung, or decaying material, but a few species lay their eggs in the open wounds of mammals; hence their common name. Some flesh fly larvae are internal parasites of other insects. The *Sarcophaga* species pictured here is noted for its dark red, forward-facing eyes. It is found almost worldwide except South America.

Habitat: Wherever carcasses or excrement is exposed to daylight.

Food: Larvae feed on decaying flesh, dead insects, excrement, crabs, snails, and spiders.

Life Cycle: Eggs are deposited on or near suitable food. Larvae (maggots) complete growth within a few days, burrow into soil to pupate and overwinter. Adults emerge in summer.



A few species of large flesh flies can lay so many eggs on an animal carcass that it is transformed into a squirming mass of maggots when the eggs hatch. This dreadful sight is really indication of a beneficial insect - the larvae help clean our world of dead animals.