

Current Status of Insecticide Resistance in the Horn Fly, *Haematobia irritans* (L.)*

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Resistance to insecticides is a critical problem which threatens our ability to control agricultural pests.^{1,2} For example, there are at least eight cases of resistance to synthetic pyrethroids, a class of insecticides that has only been available in the United States since 1977.³ One of the most recent cases involves a major ectoparasite of cattle, the horn fly, *Haematobia irritans* (L.).

History of Horn Fly Resistance

Over the past century, horn fly control has depended primarily on the use of insecticides. During the early 1900's toxicants such as fish oil, tar, kerosene, or tobacco emulsions were recommended in the United States.^{4,5} Control measures changed very little until after World War II when DDT and other chlorinated hydrocarbon insecticides were introduced. DDT, as a whole body dip or spray, effectively controlled horn flies through the mid 1950's.⁶⁻⁸ Although horn fly resistance was suspected in the late 1950's,⁹⁻¹¹ it was not confirmed until 1961.^{11,13}

During the early 1960's new insecticides like toxaphene, methoxychlor (chlorinated hydrocarbons); fenclorophos, crufonate, malathion (organophosphates);

and carbaryl (carbamate) were developed and recommended for horn fly control. Unfortunately, resistance to many of these materials soon developed (Table 1). For instance, horn fly resistance to fenclorophos occurred after intensive use of this compound in backrubbers over a 3-year period.¹⁴ During this same period, horn flies developed widespread resistance to a 0.5% toxaphene spray.^{10,14}

One of the most significant advancements for horn fly control has been the development of insecticide-impregnated cattle ear tags. Initially, these devices provided cost-effective, season-long control (<50 horn flies/animal for up to 14 weeks) of horn flies.^{15,16} However, within 1 to 2 years resistance to stirofos, the insecticide used in the first ear tags, was demonstrated in horn flies in Georgia. This was apparently due to pre-exposure of stirofos as a feed additive over a 1 1/2 year period.¹⁷

Since the development of stirofos ear tags, increased technology has led to the development of longer-lasting, more effective pyrethroid ear tags.¹⁸⁻²¹ The first commercially available pyrethroid ear tags appeared in the early 1980's and contained either fenvalerate or permethrin. Since then, a wide variety of pyrethroid tags have made their way into the market (i.e., flucythrinate, cypermethrin, cyhalothrin).

During the past eight years pyrethroid ear tags have become the predominate method for controlling horn flies on cattle throughout the United States. This novel approach, once thought to be panacea, is threatened by the development of pyrethroid resistance horn fly populations over vast geographical areas of the country (Fig. 1). Resistance to permethrin, fenvalerate, and flucythrinate were first reported in the southeastern United States (Georgia, Louisiana, and Florida).²²⁻²⁴ Recent surveys indicate that pyrethroid resistance in the horn fly extends from the southeastern and south central regions to the midwest, California and Hawaii,^{25,26} and the use of permethrin and fenvalerate appears to have conferred cross-resistance to all other pyrethroids and DDT.²⁶

Table 1. History of insecticide resistance in *Haematobia irritans*.

Insecticide Class	Insecticide	Year	State	Reference
Chlorinated hydrocarbons	toxaphene	1960	TX	10
		1961	TX	13
	DDT	1961	TX	13
		1984	LA	26
	methoxychlor	1965	LA	53
Organophosphates	fenclorophos	1962	LA	12
	stirofos	1978	GA	17
Pyrethroids	permethrin	1983	LA	23
		1983	FL	24
	fenvalerate	1982	GA	22
		1983	LA	23
		1983	FL	24
	flucythrinate	1983	GA	22
		1984	LA	26
	cypermethrin	1984	LA	26
	deltamethrin	1984	LA	26
cyhalothrin	1988	LA	51	

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Mechanisms of Resistance

The mechanisms of pyrethroid resistance in *H. irritans*

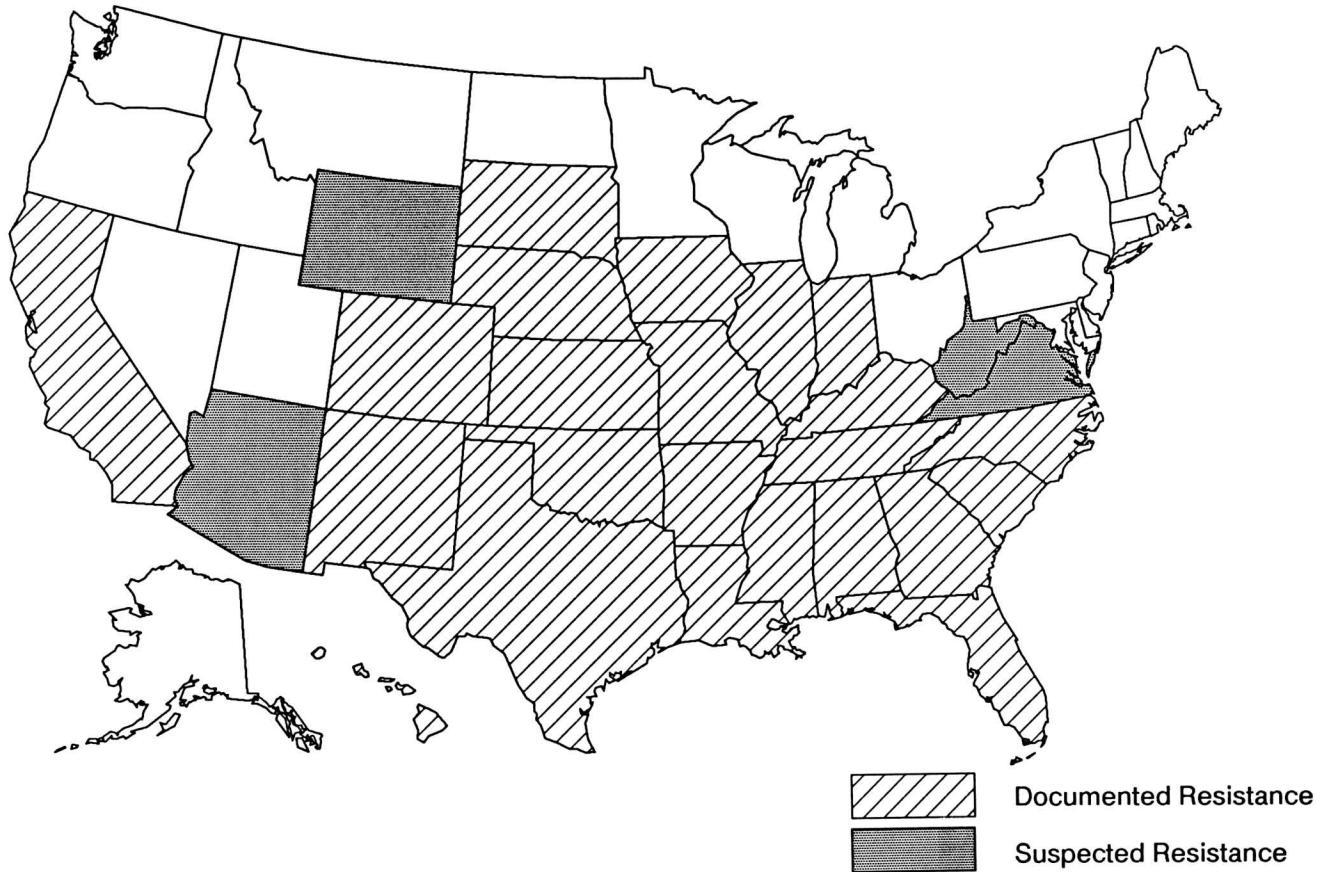


FIGURE 1. Survey of pyrethroid resistance in *H. irritans* throughout the U.S.

have only recently been investigated.^{23,24,27,28} These studies suggest that horn fly resistance is a multifactorial phenomenon involving a combination of biochemical, physiological, and behavioral adaptations (Table 2).

TABLE 2. Factors involved in pyrethroid resistance.

Physiological/Biochemical

- Decreased penetration through insect cuticle.
- Increased excretion
- Increased metabolism
- *kdr* gene active site insensitivity

Behavioral

- Insecticide irritancy/repellancy
- Areas left untreated

Physiological and Biochemical Factors

Any adaptation by the insect that interferes with the mode of action of the insecticide can produce a form of resistance. There are several mechanisms that may be

involved in insect resistance to pyrethroids. Some insects have a cuticle that restricts the penetration of the insecticide. Others may rapidly excrete or metabolize an insecticide before it has a chance to act. Where metabolism is involved, insecticides enter the insect's body and are quickly broken down to relatively non-toxic products through oxidative or hydrolytic reactions. Another mechanism, active site insensitivity (*kdr*), is independent of metabolism or detoxification. The nervous system essentially shows reduced sensitivity to the toxicant. Apparently active site insensitivity is the dominant resistance mechanism to pyrethroids and DDT²⁹⁻³¹ but not to organophosphorus, carbamate, formamidine, or cyclodiene insecticides.^{32,33}

The resistance pattern observed for the horn fly (i.e., cross-resistance to all pyrethroids and DDT, with little cross-resistance to organophosphates and carbamates; Figs. 2 and 3) is consistent with the presence of active site insensitivity.²⁶ Studies using selected synergists in combination with pyrethroids suggested that metabolism also affects pyrethroid resistance in horn flies.²⁶ However, differences in absorption, metabolism, and excretion between susceptible and resistant horn flies did not indicate these to be major mechanisms in pyrethroid resistance.

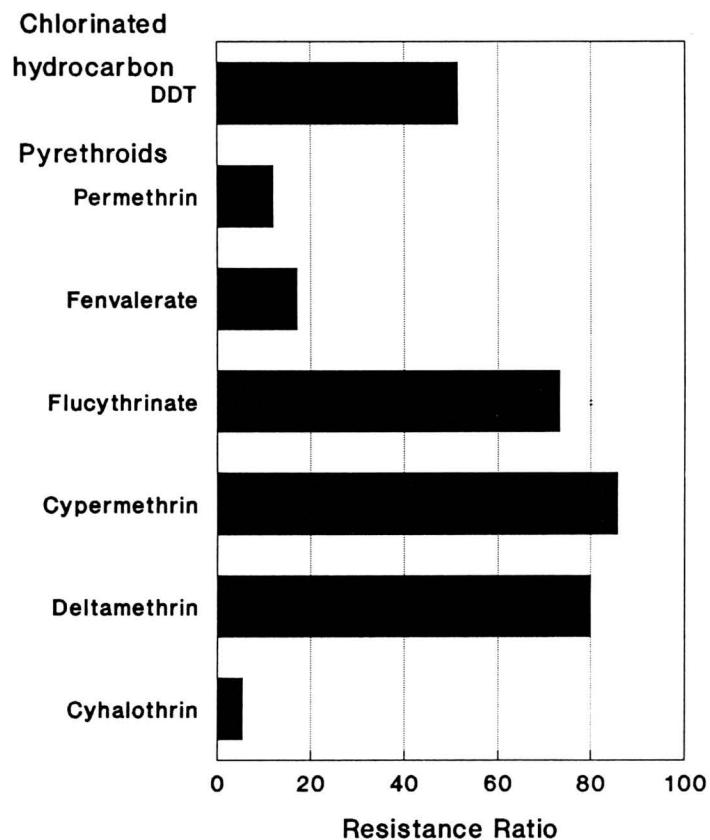


FIGURE 2. Resistance ratios for selected chlorinated hydrocarbon and pyrethroid insecticides. Resistance ratio = LD₅₀ resistant population / LD₅₀ susceptible population. Data adapted from Byford et al. (1985) and Byford and Sparks (1988).

Behavioral Factors

In 1984, researchers in Louisiana observed that the irritating properties of permethrin and fenvalerate were altering horn fly distributions on cattle treated with pyrethroid ear tags. Laboratory and field studies demonstrated that resistant horn flies exhibited a hypersensitivity to the pyrethroids. These horn flies preferentially occupied the untreated ventral or posterior regions of pyrethroid tagged cattle and avoided the treated dorsal or anterior regions (Fig. 4). This behavior prevents horn flies from acquiring a lethal dose of the insecticide and produces a "behavioral resistance" mechanism. Should the chronic redistribution of horn flies continue to evolve, ear tags will become increasingly less effective, regardless of the insecticide used.

Problem

Whenever an entire pest population is intensively pressured with an insecticide for several generations, resis-

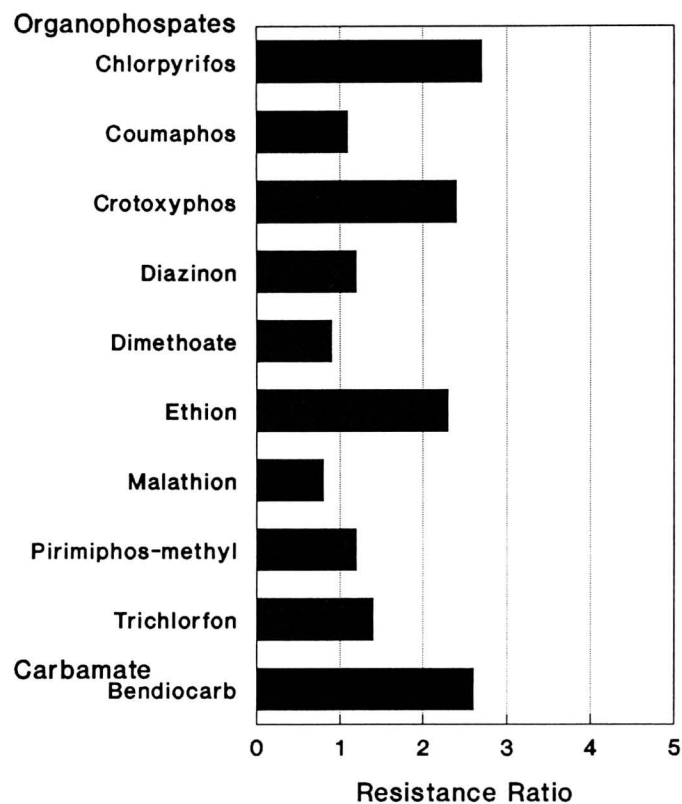


FIGURE 3. Resistance ratios for selected organophosphate and carbamate insecticides. Resistance ratio = LD₅₀ resistant population / LD₅₀ susceptible population. Data adapted from Byford et al. (1985, 1988).

tance is expected to develop quickly. For example, resistance to stirofos appeared after 1 to 2 years of use,¹⁷ and resistance to permethrin and fenvalerate after 2 to 3 years.^{22,23} The rate at which resistance develops is contingent upon a variety of factors.³⁴⁻³⁹ In the case of *H. irritans*, the factors that make ear tags so effective and acceptable for controlling horn flies are the same factors that have contributed to the rapid development of pyrethroid resistance (Table 3). For instance, ear tags are applied to cattle at the beginning of the horn fly season and remain on for 6 to 12 months, releasing the insecticide slowly and providing every generation of the horn fly with continuous exposure to a single insecticide.

Several aspects of horn fly biology also influence the development of resistance. The high host specificity, short generation time and the fact that horn flies remain on the host virtually all of their adult life, ensures continuous selection pressure. Since all cattle within the herd are tagged, all horn flies experience this pressure. The interaction of ear tag characteristics with horn fly biology enhances the rapid development of resistance and complicates resistance management.

TABLE 3. Contribution of the treatment strategy and the insect pest to insecticide resistance.

Ear Tag

- Prolonged exposure to a single insectide
- High insecticide selection pressure
- Every insect generation is selected
- Selection occurs prior to mating
- No treatment threshold
- Area wide coverage

Horn Fly

- Highly host specific
- Short generation time
- High reproductive potential
- Highly mobile pest

TABLE 4. Chemical approaches to resistance management.

Management by Saturation

- Use of higher odsages
- Use of synergists

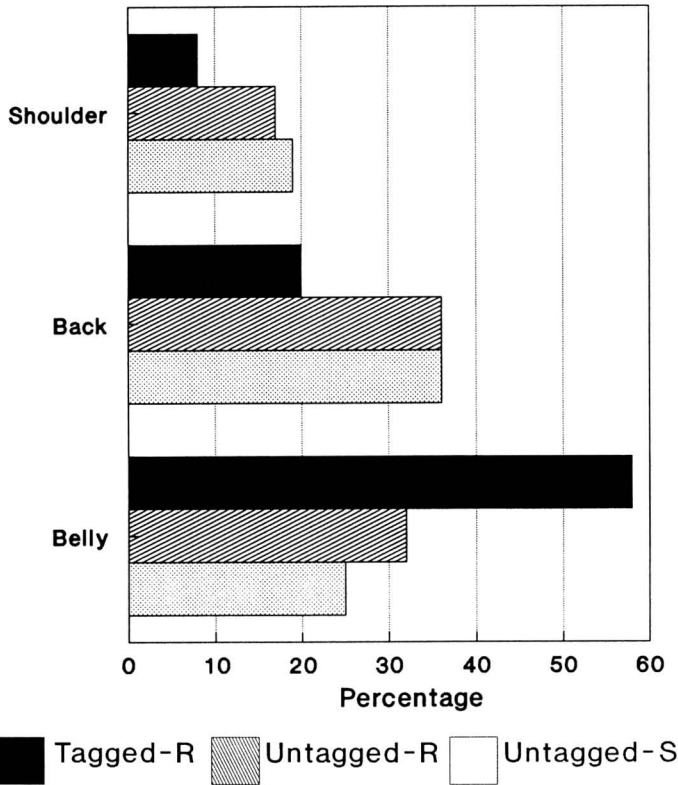
Management by Multiple Attack

- Use of insecticide mixtures
- Alternations of insecticides

Managment by Moderation

- Less frequent applications
- Use of non-persistent compounds
- Localized applications
- Leaving generations/populations untreated
- Preservation of susceptible individuals

laboratory for efficacy against horn flies. Crotoxyphos, diazinon, dimethoate, malathion, pirimiphos-methyl, and trichlorfon were nearly as toxic as the pyrethroid permethrin to both susceptible and resistant flies.⁴⁴ In addition, diazinon is more toxic to pyrethroid resistant horn flies than susceptible horn flies.⁴⁵ Field studies have shown that diazinon and pirimiphos-methyl ear tags provide acceptable control (90 to 100%) of pyrethroid resistant horn flies for up to 19 weeks.^{44,45} Although horn fly resistance to diazinon and pirimiphos-methyl has not been demonstrated, it is expected to occur in the near future if



Data adapted from Byford et.al. (1987).

FIGURE 4. Distribution (percentage) of resistant (R) and susceptible (S) *H. irritans* on pyrethroid tagged and untagged cattle.

Management of Resistance

A number of approaches are available for managing pyrethroid horn flies. The most effective approach consists of good pest management practices, involving the integration of biological, cultural, mechanical, and chemical control strategies. However, implementation of many of the non-chemical practices is either too expensive or impossible due to gaps in knowledge of horn fly biology at this time. Chemical approaches include the use of alternative insecticides singly, or in mixtures or rotations with other insecticides, and the use of alternative delivery systems⁴⁰⁻⁴⁴ (Table 4). Another common practice is to increase the dosage of insecticide.³⁸ Although this may overwhelm resistant horn flies and provide effective short term control, such techniques exert a greater selection pressure on the population and ultimately increase the level of resistance.

Historically, the approach most often used is to switch to alternative insecticides which have different modes of action. For example, organophosphorus insecticides block the transmission of nerve impulses rather than binding to active sites on the nerve cell, like pyrethroids. Several organophosphorus insecticides have been screened in the

these ear tags are used in the same manner as pyrethroid tags.

Considering the time (8 to 10 years) and expense (\$20 to 25 million) required to develop new insecticides,^{2,46,47} simply replacing one class with another is no longer practical. Therefore, it is imperative that measures be taken to prevent or at least slow the development of resistance to current and future insecticides. One approach is to use insecticide mixtures such as an insecticide and synergist, or two (or more) insecticides. In theory, individuals not killed by one insecticide in a mixture will be killed by the other. For mixtures to work, it is important that the pest not be resistant to any of the components in the mixture and that the components have similar decay rates to avoid selection by a single toxicant. Also, modes of action should be different so that resistance to one component does not confer resistance to the entire mixture.³⁸

The use of selected synergists may also serve to delay resistance. Synergists inhibit specific metabolic mechanisms and thereby eliminate the selective advantage of those individuals possessing such mechanisms. Since increased metabolism is only a minor factor in pyrethroid resistance, synergists such as piperonyl butoxide (PBO), an oxidase inhibitor, and DEF, an esterase inhibitor, provide very little synergism when combined with permethrin or fenvalerate.^{26,48} However, in studies using the α S,IR3R stereoisomer of cyhalothrin (possibly the most biologically active pyrethroid known^{49,50}), in combination with PBO and DEF nearly doubled efficacy against resistant horn flies as compared to susceptible horn flies, resulting in a resistance ratio to levels below that of the pyrethroids alone.⁵¹

Although this demonstrates that certain pyrethroid/synergist mixtures can effectively control pyrethroid resistant horn flies, at least in the short term, precautions should be considered with this strategy. Pyrethroids like permethrin, fenvalerate, cypermethrin, flucythrinate, and cyhalothrin are not ideal for use in the mixture because of the high degree of resistance to these insecticides in the fly population. Merely increasing the toxicity of the pyrethroid is insufficient and more importantly, the use of a mixture after resistance has developed to one of the insecticides negates the primary advantage of a mixture—theoretical long-term control of the pest.

Another approach is to rotate or alternate insecticides. This concept assumes that resistant individuals will revert back to susceptibility in the absence of an insecticide. Though little has been done to define the requirements for rotations, certain criteria must be met for this strategy to succeed. First, the insecticides should possess different modes of action.^{38,52} Secondly, there must be a low frequency of resistant genes for each insecticide in the rotation to avoid multiple resistance in any single individual in the pest population. Thirdly, rotations must be long enough to allow horn flies to revert back to susceptibility.

However, if rotations are too infrequent, coadaptation through genetic recombination may eliminate the disadvantages associated with the resistant genotype and resistance will increase.^{41,48,53}

Alternative methods of insecticide application; e.g. sprays, backrubbers, dust bags or boluses, may delay the development of resistance. These delivery systems apply a discrete, less persistent dose of the insecticide than ear tags. Spray treatments every 4 to 6 weeks should be sufficient for adequate horn fly control. In addition, if effective residues from backrubbers and dust bags only last 5 to 6 days, this would provide an opportunity for susceptible horn flies to immigrate into a herd of cattle and dilute the buildup of resistance.

The use of larvicides in the form of sustained-release boluses presents an additional opportunity for survival of susceptible horn flies. By only treating part of a cattle herd with these boluses, a portion of the manure pats are left untreated. Thus, susceptible horn flies will be allowed to survive. Although boluses effectively inhibit the development of horn fly larvae, they have no effect on adults.

Conclusions

Insecticide resistance is a complex subject with a diversity of opinions relative to its prevention and management. Generally, insecticide resistance occurs through mechanisms having a broad spectrum of effects, notably active site insensitivity or enhanced metabolism.

The evolution of resistant pest populations is a predictable response to insecticide use. The probability of resistance developing is determined by the impact that a particular treatment strategy has on a pest population. The nature of this impact depends on both the biological properties of the pest population and the characteristics of the treatment strategy.

To effectively control *H. irritans* without the fear of rapid development of insecticide resistance, additional information on the psychology, biochemistry and behavior of insecticide resistance is needed. Without this information, many of the previously mentioned approaches will likely result in only a slight delay in the widespread development of insecticide resistance in *H. irritans*.

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