

FOOD VENDORS AND FLIES

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Houseflies (*Musca domestica*) are invertebrates with jointed appendages belonging to family Muscidae. Members of this group are two winged insects possessing numerous hairs on their bodies and legs. Insects of importance in this group are the common houseflies (*Musca domestica*), the lesser flies (*Fannia species*) and stableflies (*Stomoxys calcitrans*). These flies look morphologically alike but rather differ in some respect.

The houseflies have been incriminated as carriers of food borne diseases notably dysentery, typhoid and cholera. It is important that food should be properly handled so as to avoid easy access of these flies on the food since their droppings and their hairy legs convey some of these microorganisms that are responsible for the transmission of these aforementioned diseases.

Food vendors show apathetic attitude in handling of food for human consumption. Many at times hawkers can be carrying exposed bean cakes, fried yams, “puff-puff”, pap (‘akamu’), sugar cane, suya etc. In this regard the flies take delight in perching on these exposed delicacies.

Man with his non-challant attitude buys and relishes this food banking on the popular dictum that “disease no dey kill African”. Unknown to him he contacts one of these organisms which he may not remember to attribute it to the source.

Once these parasites are picked they continue to multiple by a fast method i.e. binary fission. Apart from carrying bacteria, houseflies do carry eggs of some worms like nematodes (round worms) and cestodes (tape worms) and when deposited on food they will be ingested by the vertebrate host i.e man thereby completing its short life cycle in the host’s system.

Relating to some of the commonest habitats, these invertebrates enjoy feeding on used calabashes of “burukutu”, burukutu pots, raw meat, slaughter slaps and “nono” containers. The discussion dwells on the need for proper handling of food. In order to combine the way flies transmit microorganisms, it is important for health personnel to maintain the good ethics of their profession by enlightening the populace on the need to improve on hygiene since this is one of the basis for social transformation and development of the people.

It is blatantly obvious that this may not be an easy task to convince the local people, however, there is the urgent need to embark on a vigorous awareness campaign which will come up with comprehensive positive measures which will no doubt bring about far reaching changes in our midst if health for all by the year 2000 is to be attained.