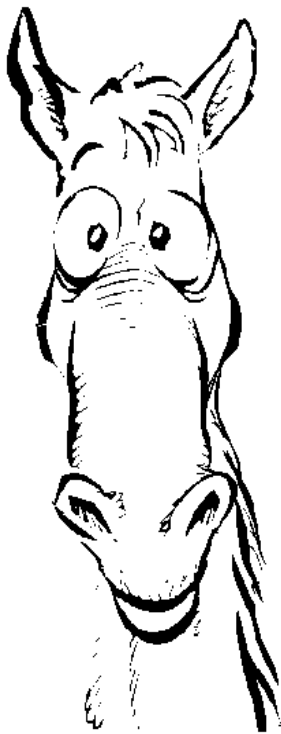




The No Fly Zone by Cindy K. Roberts

A long, hot summer assures me that global warming has produced stressful conditions in the equine world. There's the relentless sun, heat, humidity, dusty trails, dry pastures and flying predators known as flies. Yes, I am talking about the blood sucking insect classified as *Stomoxys calcitrans*. They are annoying, nuisances...a known threat to "Trigger" and they are capable of causing disease and spreading an epidemic. I know this sounds like cowgirl horror so if you have a weak heart or perhaps are pregnant or nursing...you may want to read this at your own discretion.



You see, I have lived close to a manure pile all my life, so I developed this compulsive preoccupation with flies since my childhood. **By my own confession, I am admitting...I have an obsession with flies.** As a child I would capture them and keep them in a jar tucked away in my room so I could torture them at my leisure. Truly, it was sheer delight to see the nasty critters that caused so much pain to my horse, to finally get the severe reprimand that was due. Yes, justice was served in a mason jar.

I never did show partiality to one fly over another. A fly, any fly buzzing around my horse was going to get whacked or trapped and tortured. By way of torture, I would strategically cut holes in the lid of the jar and lay it on its side in front of a fan oscillating at high speed. A few drops of Elmer's Glue smeared inside the jar made it fascinating to watch the flies get stuck and try to break free. Oh, the horrid looks on their tiny little faces! I took great pleasure in this barnyard pastime during my childhood summers. Time had passed and I have learned, I am not the only one that shares a supreme disgust for those despicable flying creatures.

Several years ago, a farrier shared with me his own desire to afflict pain to horse flies and demonstrated to me his sick methods. I am happy to say that I have not stooped to his level of torture. Piercing a blade of straw through a horse fly torso to watch the critter sputter for a moment, tumble and then do a crash dive to the ground is just not right. I suppose it stands to reason, if your occupation is working in an environment exposed to obnoxious pests, you could develop an intense hostility toward horse flies. That along with having a lot of time on your hands can lead to devious thoughts on what to do with pesky flying critters. I do believe

that farriers suffer the worst form of anxiety from being exposed to these nasty and persistent biting insects. Psychologists call it living with a form of angry denial that can develop from being too close to manure for long periods of time. People living in the city call it a sickness.

Now that I am in my adult years, I am mature and spend my time more wisely. Older, wiser and sharper than ever, I too torture horse flies but, with a feminine touch. I designed a mauve colored flyswatter decorated with a bright pink flower...I call it my signature flyswatter. I find that my newly developed camouflage flower fly swatter is the best weapon to use when advancing an attack. It is balanced and has an excellent fit to my hand. The flat side is to be used for the direct hit; the flower however, is for camouflage. I took this sport to a whole new level by desensitizing my horses and mules to my brightly decorated weapon so that I could fight the enemy from horseback.

Sometimes my aim is not as quick or accurate as I would like it to be so I started cheating by using aerosol hair products before I engaged with direct combat while on the ground. There's nothing more aggravating then being close to your target and the tenacious varmints get away...only to return later bigger and stronger.

Recently after a days ride to return to my trailer, I found my camper swarming with flies. Clearly, I was outnumbered. Too weary to face the enemy, I hunted through my cabinets for an easy solution. I travel light and pack only necessary items in my trailer. After searching through drawers of western romance novels and a firearm or two, I found my favorite brand of hair spray. Experience told me if an advanced formula of super hold hair spray with the words "Freeze" branded on the can is able to protect your hair through a buffalo stampede...then this will now be my weapon of choice. I advanced to the war zone, aimed



and fired. The enemy was airborne for a moment and now have lost power. Wings sputtering in slow motion have now frozen in time...floating to the nearest runway, the trailer floor. The forced landing of the little beggars now have met their demise with the bottom of my boot. No one got hurt and the dirty deed was done. You are now in the No Fly Zone. Be brave and success be with you in all your barnyard battles.

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