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my ref EH/EH/WK/201318530

your ref

date 26 February 2014

Dear Resident

### **Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 79 – nuisance fly investigation**

During 2012 and 2013 we received many reports from Ditchling residents about problems caused by high numbers of Lesser House -fly in and around homes in the village.

We have investigated and seen that the flies have caused much inconvenience to residents. We will do whatever is possible to bring fly numbers down to reasonable levels. This letter provides a summary of the action we are taking this year to control the flies. It also offers advice on action you can take as residents and within the local community.

We employed professional entomologists in 2012 and 2013 to investigate potential sources of the flies and to identify any breeding activity. Their conclusions and recommendations have provided us with a wealth of new information about the ecology of the Lesser House -fly. We have also increased our knowledge about methods of fly control, management of livestock and methods to control fly numbers at source. We have learned that communities in other areas of England have been affected by similar infestations and that the scientific and practical understanding of how to control this species is still evolving. Our Environmental Health Team is now well prepared to monitor fly numbers this year and ensure we implement the best known practices to deal with them wherever they are appropriate.

We will be working closely with keepers of large poultry flocks in the Ditchling area, including the Macs' Farm, to monitor fly numbers from the end of March. This is likely to continue until October, depending on the weather. This work will involve:

- Identifying any commercial and private poultry keepers not already inspected;
- interviewing keepers to confirm flock and manure management practices;
- weekly monitoring of adult fly populations at all appropriate locations;
- weekly monitoring of larval fly populations at all appropriate locations;
- close scrutiny of manure and its management; and
- implementing additional management processes where appropriate.

In addition to these steps, if a statutory nuisance is established at commercial premises, we will take formal action in accordance with our statutory duty and enforcement policy. The law does not currently extend to non-commercial poultry keepers, so formal action cannot be considered in these circumstances. In these cases we will work with individual private keepers to create and maintain an environment which is hostile to breeding flies.

The Macs' Farm keeps the largest poultry flock in the Ditchling area. We have developed an effective working relationship with the owners and we have agreed arrangements for the weekly monitoring of adult and larval fly populations during 2014. The owners already use established methods of fly control, in accordance with the requirements of their organic status. They have also informed me that they will implement additional voluntary measures from 2014, including the regular removal of poultry manure and additional fly control techniques. They continuously monitor the latest industrial and scientific understanding of insect ecology and control in a search for novel control methods.

The Lesser House-fly will breed quickly and easily wherever appropriate conditions exist. This means even a single hen kept at home can contribute to local fly populations if manure is not properly managed. It is considered extremely likely that many locations contribute to a greater or lesser extent to the local adult fly population. Therefore, if you keep poultry, we recommend that you:

- Ensure all manure is kept dry at all times;
- isolate all water sources from manure (e.g. water drinkers, rainfall and run-off, leaking sheds, leaking guttering) and maintain them whenever required;
- clear manure out of sheds on a four-weekly basis or more regularly in order to break the fly's life-cycle;
- ensure any old manure is stored dry and responsibly disposed of as soon as possible after clearing sheds out; and
- keep a record of where old manure is disposed of or passed onwards.

There is a greater chance of successfully controlling fly numbers if we can establish where poultry is currently being kept. If you keep poultry, please contact Steven Teale on 01273 484354 to arrange a short interview, either by telephone or email. This would be intended to highlight any issues which might contribute to fly numbers and improve our understanding of the distribution of poultry in the area. We will rely on the cooperation of non-commercial keepers, so I would be grateful to hear from anyone, whether they are a poultry keeper or not, who wishes to report poultry kept in the area.

It should also be noted that the mild and wet weather this winter will benefit the ecology of the Lesser House-fly. It is expected that survival rates of larvae will be greater than average and that adult flies should be expected again during 2014.

Finally, it is not my intention to suggest that a single keeper of poultry is solely responsible for the unnaturally high fly populations of recent years. Only a dedicated approach to flock management by all keepers, whether people keep large flocks or

single birds, will help to improve the unsatisfactory conditions of previous years. I sincerely hope that we can help provide some relief to the unpleasant conditions residents have tolerated during the past few years.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Hele". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "E" and "H".

Ed Hele  
Principal Environmental Health Officer