

# "Bug of the Month"

A common sight around homes in late summer and fall in the Puget Sound area is the adult crane fly. There are actually two different species of crane fly, both introduced from Europe. Both species are in the genus *Tipula* and can cause extensive lawn damage.

**WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?** The European crane fly adult resembles a huge mosquito and very long delicate legs and are harmless. The front edge of the wing consists of a smoky gray-brown band and the body is colored in the same gray to light tan fashion. The crane fly head is elongated and form a snout. The European crane fly, *T. paludosa*, is the smaller of the two introduced species. The eyes of the European crane fly are notably separated while the common crane fly, *T. oleracea*, has eyes very close together, almost touching. The larvae of the two species are brownish, leathery grubs and are indistinguishable between the two species.



**WHAT DO THEY DO?** The European crane fly has only one generation per year while the common crane fly has two generations. If you see adult crane flies bouncing around your house and yard in early spring, then this is the common crane fly. Both species can be seen flying around in September. While the adults are bouncing around the lawn, the females are depositing eggs on the lawn. The eggs then hatch and the larvae begin feeding on the roots and grass blades of the lawn. When the larvae are mature, they will go inactive and pupate in the soil and finally emerge as adults. Damage from the larvae depends greatly on the health of the lawn. Damage appears as brown patches in the lawn and may be quite extensive. Damage to the lawn is depends largely on the lawns health, drainage, fertilization and age. Healthy lawns can have 40 or more larvae per square foot and not show any signs of damage. Newly laid sod and newly established turf tends to suffer more from crane fly feeding than established, healthy lawns.

**MANAGEMENT.** Cultural practices are the best for management of crane flies.

- Most species of crane flies are aquatic so avoid soggy areas. Maintaining lawns in sunny areas will also lessen the impact of crane fly damage.
- Root health and growth is very important for promoting healthy turf and deterring crane fly populations. Remove thatch when the thatch layer exceeds ½ inch.
- Aerate the lawn to reduce compaction and increase drainage in the soil. This will provide a better habitat for the lawn's root system. Aeration only needs to be done every 2-4 years depending on the soil type and degree of compaction.
- Good fertilization practices are another important factor for reducing crane fly problems. Provide enough fertilization to promote root growth but be aware of the soil type and the lawn's requirements.
- Finally, irrigate the lawn properly. Irrigation practices should be done to promote deep root growth.

Pesticides can be used for severe crane fly infestations. One of the most common pesticides used is diazinon. Diazinon irritates the larvae causing them to move towards the surface. This leaves them exposed to bird predation. This can lead to increased mortality of the birds, so pesticides should only be used as a last resort and then used sparingly. **Be sure to read and follow all directions on the label exactly...**

**MORE QUESTIONS?** Please do not hesitate to give your "Bug Docs" a call at comm.: (360) 315-4450, DSN: 322-4450 or you can e-mail us at [MEI@ndvecc.navy.mil](mailto:MEI@ndvecc.navy.mil).