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# FLY OF THE MONTH

## The Tup's Indispensable Dry Fly-by Alan Sheperd (Australia)

<b>Hook:</b>	Size 16 up eye, dry fly hook.
<b>Thread:</b>	Yellow.
<b>Tail:</b>	Honey dun or light blue cock hackle fibres.
<b>Body:</b>	Mix white fur from a ram's testicle with lemon-coloured fur from a spaniel and cream seal's fur with a small amount of yellow mohair.
<b>Hackle:</b>	Light-blue cock hackle freckled thickly with gold.



**A**ustin was a tobacconist of Tiverton in Devon, South West England in 1900. As a side-line, he made and sold flies. Presumably Mr. Austin and daughter supplied various patterns of the day and materials to dress popular flies. His pattern, the Tups Indispensable, was effective when trout were taking pale midge or mayflies. Mr Austin sent a sample of dubbing with tying instructions on how to tie his unnamed fly pattern to Mr G.E.M. Skues. He informed Mr. Skues that he had found it to be particularly successful in imitating female olive spinners. Mr. Skues followed the instructions and made the fly. He spent most of the following September testing the fly on his local water, the River Ichen. Skues was one of two people given the dressing secret by Mr Austin. He was so impressed that he published his findings calling the fly the 'Tups Indispensable.' The recipe for the pattern was kept secret and thus Mr Austin obtained a monopoly on selling the fly. The article by Skues, exalting the fly, was widely read and lots of orders were placed. The fly became so popular that Mr Austin became utterly sick of tying it.

Why did Skues call it Tup's Indispensable? Well the 'Indispensable' part comes from the fact that it should not be left out of your fly-box, as it is such a good fish taker. The 'Tup's' part of the name refers to a Ram, a male sheep that is used for breeding. In Britain in those days, farmers used a sponge or rag soaked in dye tied to the

under side of the Ram. In the morning, they would inspect their flock to see which females had dye stained on their backs from being 'tupped' by the Ram. The original material for this fly was urine and dye stained wool taken from a ram's testicles mixed with lemon coloured fur from a spaniel and a little yellow mohair, replaced later with crimson seal's fur.

Mr. Austin and his daughter kept the dubbing materials secret; they had a monopoly on the supply of the correct dressing. Mr. Austin passed away in 1914 but it was not until 1934 that the secret ingredient, fur from a ram's testicle was revealed. It was kept a secret until after his daughter, who continued the business, had retired.

In his Notes & Letters, Theodore Gordon had great praise for this fly. He particularly liked the 'Tups' dubbing which he had sent to him from England. He used this dubbing on other patterns. It can be fished dry when trout are feeding near the surface. It can also be useful in high summer when reduced water flow and high temperatures can make the trout very fussy.

Using fur from the ram's testicle area wasn't even an original idea. The first use of this material goes to Alexander Mackintosh in the book *The Drifffield Angler*, 1806. He suggests, "Take a little fine wool from the ram's testicles, which is a beautiful dusty yellow." ~ Alan Shepherd

