

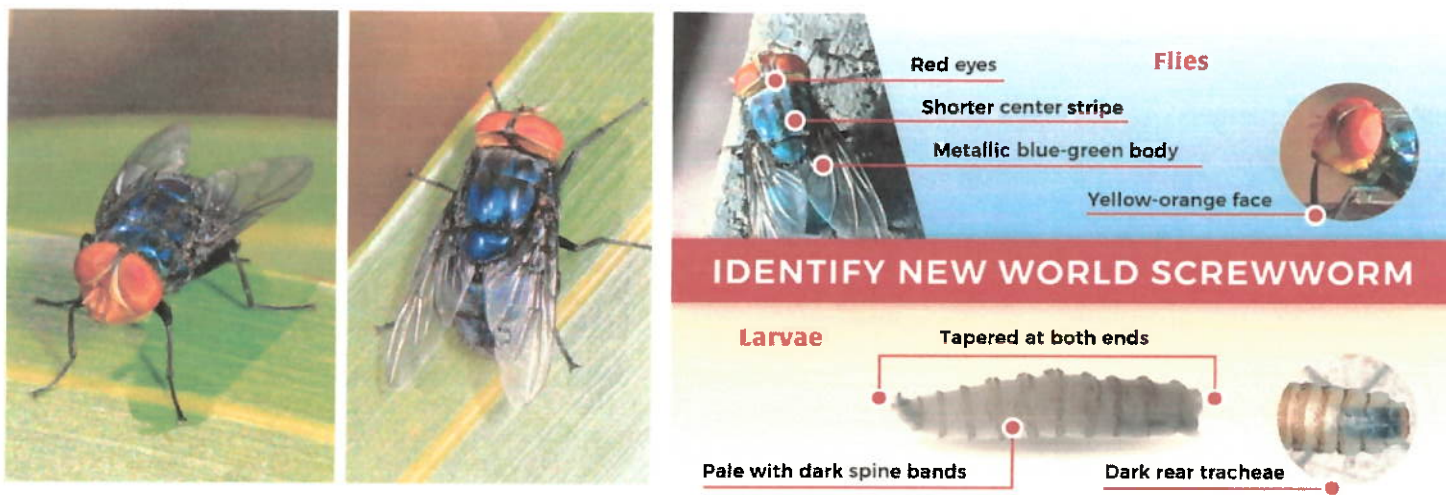
New World Screwworm (NWS): What Pet and Livestock Owners Need to Know

What is New World Screwworm?

New World screwworm (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) is a parasitic fly whose larvae (maggots) feed on **living tissue**. Adult flies are attracted to wounds, surgical sites, navels of newborn animals, and body openings such as the ears, nose, mouth, vulva, or prepuce. The larvae can cause **severe tissue damage** and may be life-threatening if not treated promptly. NWS can affect livestock, pets, wildlife, and, rarely, humans.

The New World screwworm fly can complete its life cycle in as few as 21 days. After mating, a female fly seeks a host for its eggs, looking for either a wound — something as small as a tick bite will do — or a mucous membrane, such as around the nostrils or eyes. The female may lay 200 to 300 eggs at a time, and up to 3,000 eggs over its short lifespan.

Larvae hatch from the eggs within 24 hours and begin feeding. At this point, the wound site on the host animal may appear small, possibly obscuring a much larger infestation below the skin. After a week or so, the larvae fall to the ground, where they bury themselves to pupate. In approximately another week, they emerge as mature flies. Female screwworm flies mate only once in their lives, whereas male screwworm flies mate multiple times. By introducing sterile males to an outbreak population, the females will lay eggs that will not hatch. The USDA/TAHC is working toward expanding the output of sterile flies by re-opening the facility and increase the numbers released.



Why is this important now?

New World screwworm has recently been detected in Texas after decades of successful eradication efforts in the United States. State and federal animal health officials are actively responding to prevent further spread.

Animals at Risk

- Cattle
- Horses
- Sheep and goats
- Swine
- Dogs and cats
- Wildlife and other warm-blooded animals

Animals with recent wounds, surgeries, tick bites, branding sites, castration sites, dehorning wounds, or umbilical wounds are at highest risk.

Preventing New World Screwworm (NWS)

Prevention focuses on **reducing wounds, protecting wounds, controlling flies, and frequent animal inspections**. There are no long-term preventive measures, only short-term treatments and preventions.

1. Check Animals Regularly

Inspect animals at least daily during high-risk periods, especially:

- Newborn animals (umbilical sites)
- Animals with cuts, scrapes, or abrasions
- Recent surgical patients
- Castrated, dehorned, branded, or ear-tagged livestock
- Animals with tick bites or other skin lesions
- Recent surgeries

Keep wounds clean and treated according to veterinary recommendations. Use veterinarian-recommended fly control products. Report suspicious wounds or maggot infestations immediately.



What to Look For

Contact your veterinarian immediately if you notice:

- A wound that suddenly enlarges or fails to heal
 - Foul odor from a wound
 - Bloody or draining lesions
 - Enlarging wounds
 - Visible maggots or egg masses
 - Excessive licking, chewing, or irritation at a wound
 - Depression, pain, or decreased appetite
 - Lesions around the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, genital area, or navel of newborn animals
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- White or cream-colored egg masses
 - Eggs arranged like overlapping shingles or fish scales
 - Deposited at wound margins rather than deep inside the wound
 - Usually hundreds of eggs laid at one time
 - Eggs hatch quickly, often within about 12–24 hours under favorable conditions



They can be difficult to distinguish from other fly eggs without magnification, but seeing clustered white eggs around a fresh wound is a reason for immediate veterinary attention.

After Hatching

The larvae are more damaging than the eggs because they burrow deep into and feed on living tissue, causing wounds to enlarge rapidly.

2. Treat Wounds Promptly

- Clean all wounds as soon as they are found.
- Follow veterinary recommendations for wound care.
- Monitor healing closely.
- Re-examine wounds daily until healed.
- If you see maggots in a wound, do not try to treat it yourself. Prompt veterinary treatment can save tissue, reduce pain, and help prevent the spread of New World screwworm to other animals.
- Even small wounds can attract screwworm flies.



3. Schedule Management Procedures Carefully

When possible:

- Avoid elective procedures during periods of high fly activity. Fly season typically peaks from **late spring through early fall** (peaking in the warmest, most humid summer months).
- Plan castration, dehorning, branding, and other procedures when animals can be monitored closely afterward.
- Protect procedure sites according to veterinary recommendations.
- Have the veterinarian come out rather than trailering when screw worms are suspected.

4. Use Fly Control Measures

Work with your veterinarian to develop an integrated fly-control program, which may include:

- Insecticide ear tags
- Pour-on products
- Sprays
- Dust bags
- Premise fly control

⚠ No fly-control program is 100% effective by itself, so wound management remains essential.

5. Isolate and Examine Suspect Animals

If an animal develops:

- A non-healing wound
- Maggots in a wound
- A foul-smelling lesion
- Rapidly worsening tissue damage

Separate the animal from the herd when practical and contact your veterinarian immediately.

6. Monitor New Arrivals

Inspect newly purchased or transported animals for:

- Existing wounds
- Surgical sites
- Evidence of infestation

What Should I Do If I Find Maggots?

1. Contact your veterinarian immediately. All suspected cases must have samples collected and reported to the state so that counter-active measures can be taken if necessary.
2. Do not move affected livestock unless directed by animal health officials.
3. If possible, take clear photographs of the wound and larvae.
4. Follow veterinary instructions for treatment and sample collection.

⚠ **Not all maggots are screwworms.** However, any wound containing maggots should be examined by a veterinarian immediately. If New World screwworm is suspected, rapid diagnosis and treatment are critical.

Early diagnosis and treatment greatly improve outcomes and help prevent spread of this serious pest.

When to Call Us

Please contact our clinic immediately if your animal has:

- Any wound containing maggots
- A rapidly worsening wound
- Unexplained tissue damage
- A non-healing surgical or traumatic wound

⚠ Prompt veterinary evaluation is critical.

Livestock Producers and Pet Owners

If an owner suspects screwworm:

- Contact their veterinarian immediately.
- Do not attempt to diagnose the infestation themselves.
- Follow veterinary instructions regarding animal movement and wound management.

Wildlife Cases

Suspicious infestations in wildlife should be reported to USDA Wildlife Services at 866-4USDA-WS (866-487-3297).

Regulatory Consequences

Specific penalties vary by state and circumstances, but knowingly concealing a reportable animal disease may result in:

- State regulatory enforcement actions
- Civil penalties or fines
- Restrictions on animal movement
- Potential liability if the disease spreads to other operations

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This information is intended to raise awareness and is not a substitute for a veterinary examination or treatment.