



# New World Screwworm

(*Cochliomyia hominivorax*)

New World screwworm (NWS) is a devastating pest of livestock. It can affect any warm-blooded animal. It can also affect people. Untreated screwworm infestations can be fatal to livestock, wildlife, and humans. Not controlling the pest in a livestock population can damage a country's economy.

## Distribution

NWS is endemic in Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and countries in South America.

Since 2006, the United States and Panama have maintained a barrier zone in eastern Panama. This barrier zone prevents NWS from moving north from South America to screwworm-free areas in Central and North America.

In 2023, APHIS confirmed an unprecedented number of NWS cases in Panama. Since then, cases have been detected in every Central American country and Mexico.

## Hosts

NWS can affect livestock, pets, wildlife, occasionally birds, and in rare cases, people.

This pest can infest a wide variety of wounds, from tick bites to cuts and dehorning or branding wounds. Infestations are very common in the navels of newborn animals and the genital regions of their mothers.

## Description

Adult screwworm flies have orange eyes, a metallic blue or green body, and three dark stripes along their backs. The center stripe begins partway down the backside and appears shorter than the outer stripes.

Screwworm larvae (maggots) burrow into a wound, feeding as they go like a screw driving into wood. The maggots cause extensive damage by tearing at the hosts' tissue with sharp mouth hooks. The wound becomes deeper and larger as more maggots hatch and feed on living tissue.

## Impact

NWS can threaten the livelihood of livestock producers. It can cause millions of dollars' worth of production losses and economic damage. Screwworm also pose a threat to humans in infested areas.

## What You Can Do

Immediately report signs of screwworm to your local veterinarian, State veterinarian's office, or USDA ([www.aphis.usda.gov/contact/animal-health](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/contact/animal-health)). Look for the following signs in warm-blooded animals (including pets and birds):

- Irritated behavior
- Head shaking
- The smell of decay
- Presence of maggots in a wound



Adult screwworm fly

If you travel with a dog to regions affected by screwworm, know the requirements for returning to the United States. Go to [www.aphis.usda.gov/pet-travel/another-country-to-us-import/dogs](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/pet-travel/another-country-to-us-import/dogs) for more information.

If you live or are traveling in areas affected by screwworm, have your animals inspected before you move them. Use available animal checkpoints to prevent the spread of this pest.

## Learn More

For more information about screwworm, including information on the NWS outbreak in Central America and Mexico, go to [www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm).

For information on how screwworms affect people or to report human disease, please visit [www.cdc.gov/myiasis/about/about-new-world-screwworm-myiasis.html](http://www.cdc.gov/myiasis/about/about-new-world-screwworm-myiasis.html).