



New World Screwworm: Frequently Asked Questions

What is New World Screwworm (NWS)?

- A parasitic fly whose larvae (maggots) burrow into the host's living tissue. This differs from other species of fly whose maggots feed on dead tissue.
- NWS affected animals can suffer from secondary infections.
- NWS is endemic in Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and countries in South America. In early 2025 cases began spreading northward through Mexico.

How does it spread?

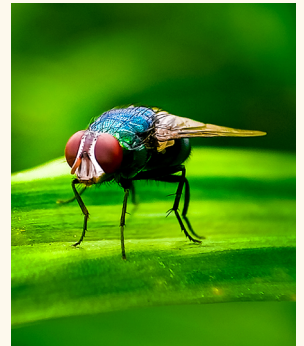
- It spreads most quickly through infected animals carrying either flies or larvae, especially animals traveling from affected regions.
- NWS flies can fly over a dozen miles on their own.
- NWS can affect all warm-blooded animals and most cases are in cattle, sheep and goats.
- NWS larvae are transmitted when a female fly lays eggs on an open wound. Some common wound examples include insect bites, animal husbandry wounds, wire cuts, and other injuries. The NWS flies also target the navel of newborn animals. NWS infested wounds often attract other female screwworms and many infestations on a single wound are possible.
- The larvae emerge 12 to 24 hours after the female fly lays them, and they are difficult to see in the first day or two.



Source: CDC

What are the symptoms?

- Open wounds with maggots, strong odor, irritated animal behavior, and tissue decay that expands and deepens over time.
- NWS larvae feed on living tissue.
- A blood-tinged fluid with a distinct odor may seep from the wound.
- Infested animals usually separate from the herd and lie down and will have visible discomfort, or decreased appetite. Untreated animals may succumb to secondary infections.



How can I prevent it?

- Inspect animals before travel, report suspicious wounds, and follow biosecurity measures.
- Animals imported from countries where the screwworm flies exist must be carefully examined by veterinarians when they reach the United States.
- Wounds should be closely checked for any screwworm eggs or larvae. The eggs are white and layered over top of one another along the edges of wounds.
- Livestock owners can use preventatives like insecticides to treat the animals upon import.

What should I do if I suspect an infection?

Contact a veterinarian or report to the Minnesota Board of Animal Health at 651-296-2942.