



Watch out for New World Screwworm

What to do

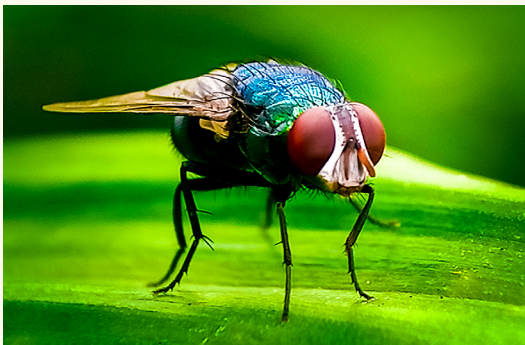
Any imported animals (including pets) should be inspected for infestations of New World Screwworm (NWS), and suspected cases must be immediately reported to the Board or USDA. Consider advising clients to treat animals with insecticides pre-movement if they're being imported from a higher-risk area. Check with the USDA on any current import restrictions from affected countries.

What to look for

NWS infestations are hard to detect in the first couple days. The best indicator of an infestation starts with checking the animal for open wounds or if the animal has recently given birth. If a wound is discovered, it should be monitored frequently for larvae burrowing deeper into the skin and enlarging the wound. Most cases present with visible larvae by the third day after hatching. In addition to wounds getting worse there may also be a red or pink (serosanguineous) discharge and distinct smell. NWS larvae differ from other fly maggots because they avoid the surface of the skin and burrow deeper into the wound, especially if disturbed. Some cases present as small openings on the animal's skin with a large pocket of larvae burrowed beneath.



Source: USDA



The fly and life cycle

Female screwworm flies are larger than a housefly with a metallic dark blue to blue-green thorax with three dark stripes on its back and a reddish-orange head. The length of the fly's life cycle varies with the temperature, and it can survive in Minnesota during warmer months. When temperatures are similar to its host range in the tropics, it can complete a life cycle in two to three weeks. However, if temperatures are in the 40's, it can take two to three months to complete a life cycle. The pupae cannot survive freezing weather and soil temperatures below 46°F.

Treatment and endemic areas

There is no vaccine for screwworm. NWS endemic locations in the tropics require livestock owners and veterinarians to check for screwworms every few days. Livestock can be protected with routine sprays or dips with insecticides. Organophosphate insecticides are effective against newly hatched larvae and adult flies.

Suspect an infestation?

Infestations, suspected flies or larvae should be reported to the Board of Animal Health immediately at 651-296-2942 or at animalhealth@state.mn.us. Some wounds may be surgically excised, treated with a larvicide and allowed to heal without closure. Treatment is usually repeated at intervals until the wound has healed. Removal of necrotic tissue may be necessary, and antibiotics may be given when secondary bacterial contamination is present.