
National IHS Public Health Council

June 29, 2026

National IHS Public Health Council Advisory – New World Screwworm Current Situation

The New World screwworm is a flesh-eating fly whose larvae (maggots) infest living tissue in animals and, less commonly, humans. The flies lay eggs in wounds or body openings, and the larvae feed on living tissue, causing severe damage if untreated (CDC, 2026). Female screwworm flies are attracted to wounds where they lay their eggs, so rapid wound care and early detection are critical.

On June 3, 2026, the USDA confirmed the first U.S. case of New World screwworm in decades, involving a calf in Zavala County, Texas. Four cases have been confirmed in the U.S. as of June 8, 2026. Response efforts, including containment measures, quarantines, surveillance, and sterile-fly releases, are underway. The CDC reports that no locally acquired human cases have been reported in the United States, and the current risk to people remains low. However, human cases have occurred in Central America and Mexico (CDC, 2026). Up-to-date information on current cases can be found here: [Current Status of New World Screwworm | Screwworm.gov](#).

The Indian Health Service places greater emphasis on community-based prevention by prioritizing early recognition, prevention, and collaboration with health and animal partners.

People at most risk:

- Individuals with chronic wounds (diabetic ulcers, pressure injuries).
- People living in rural, rancher, herder, hunter, or livestock-associated environments.
- People who spend extended time outdoors, such as in camping activities, hiking, fishing, and hunting.
- Elderly, disabled, or unhoused individuals who may have difficulty with wound care.

Community Prevention

1. Highest priority action in Humans

- Clean cuts, scrapes, burns, and surgical wounds immediately.
- Cover wounds with clean, dry dressings.

- Change bandages daily or when soiled.
- Avoid leaving wounds exposed outdoors.
- Monitor wounds for increasing pain, swelling, odor, drainage, or visible larvae.

2. Reduce Human Exposure to Flies

- Use EPA-registered insect repellents containing DEET or picaridin according to label instructions.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants when working outdoors to protect yourself.
- Use hats and protective clothing during ranching, farming, and outdoor labor.
- Keep doors and windows screened.
- Repair damaged window or door screens promptly.

3. Environmental Protection Around Homes

- Remove trash regularly.
- Maintain clean yards.
- Keep livestock areas separated from living areas when possible.
- Eliminate conditions that attract large numbers of flies.

4. Community Preparedness Supplies

Recommended stock:

- Bandages and dressings
- Antiseptic solutions
- Disposable gloves
- Insect repellent- Off, DEET,
- Sleeping Nets when camping,
- Window-screen repair materials
- Soap and water to clean (Hand Sanitizer if not available)

5. Check cattle, sheep, goats, horses, dogs, cows, and other animals for wounds.

- Check your pets, dogs, cats, horses, and cattle regularly for wounds
 - This pest can be treated, and infestations can be cleared
- Pay special attention to newborn animals, branding sites, castration wounds, tick bites, and injuries.
- Look for signs such as:
 - Open wounds that worsen instead of healing
 - Unusual behavior such as restlessness or biting at wounds
 - Foul-smelling discharge
 - Larvae (maggots) in wounds
 - Swelling and irritation
- Seek veterinary care if maggots are found in any wound
- Remove and dispose of animal carcasses quickly according to local regulations.
 - This helps reduce breeding opportunities for flies.
- Schedule procedures such as branding, dehorning, and castration during periods of lower fly activity when possible

Repellents and nets help **reduce exposure to flies**, but the most important measure for preventing screwworms is **protecting and monitoring wounds** in both people and animals.

Prevention Message: "Clean it, cover it, protect it, check it."

Any wound should be:

1. Cleaned promptly.
2. Covered securely.
3. Protected from flies.
4. Checked daily for signs of infection or infestation.

If you think **you or a family member may have a New World screwworm infestation**, treat it as a situation that needs **prompt medical attention**. Early treatment can prevent significant tissue damage. Go to your nearest Indian Health Service, Tribal 638, urban, or medical clinic and report your concerns.

Additional resources

[Report Suspected Cases of Screwworm | Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.](#)

General information:

*[The Facts About New World Screwworm](#)

[Pest Identification Card: New World Screwworm](#)

*[New World screwworm: What You Need to Know](#) (there is a wound picture on this one, might be disturbing)

[1 Screw Worm Posters FOR PRINT](#)

For hunters:

*[New World Screwworm: A Threat to Wildlife](#)

For livestock producers/ranchers/herders:

*[New World Screwworm](#) – NRCS NWS Preparedness and Response and APHIS Pest Alert

*[Look Out for New World Screwworm](#) – APHIS poster for livestock producers

Thank you for what you do each day!!

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