
National IHS Public Health Council

April 30, 2025

National IHS Public Health Council Advisory – New World Screwworm Myiasis Awareness and Prevention

I want to share important information about New World Screwworm Myiasis (NWS), a serious parasitic disease that can affect livestock, wildlife, pets, and humans. Although the United States eradicated NWS in 2006, recent cases in parts of Central America and occasional outbreaks in U.S. territories remind us of the ongoing risk.

What You Need to Know:

NWS is caused by the larvae (maggots) of the New World screwworm fly, which lay eggs in open wounds or mucous membranes of warm-blooded animals, including people. Even small wounds, like insect bites, can attract female flies. If untreated, the infestation can cause serious medical complications.

Signs & Symptoms:

- Painful, worsening, or non-healing wounds or bleeding from open sores
- Maggots are visible in wounds or moving within skin, mouth, nose, or eyes
- Unexplained bleeding or foul-smelling discharge from wounds
- Fever or chills if a secondary infection occurs

Risk Factors:

- Those who live in rural areas in the regions where livestock are raised
- People who work with livestock
- Vulnerable population, for example, immunocompromised and people living with diabetes and other chronic diseases.

Prevention:

- Keep wounds clean and covered.
- Use insect repellent and protective clothing in at-risk areas.
- Sleep indoors and in rooms with window screens.

- Check over livestock for New World Screwworms (NWS)

Treatment: The only way to treat NWS is to remove the larvae from the infested tissue. If you suspect NWS, contact a health care provider immediately. Maggots should not be discarded; they should be placed in a sealed container with 70% ethanol and brought in for confirmation.

- There are no FDA-approved medications to treat NWS at this time.

For Health Care Providers:

Conduct thorough exams, especially in patients with slow-healing wounds or who have traveled to regions reporting cases. Suspected human cases should be reported to your local health authority or the CDC at dpdx@cdc.gov for identification and guidance.

As part of our commitment to quality care and patient safety, we encourage you to remain alert, especially in areas where NWS could re-emerge. Your vigilance helps protect the health of our communities.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the people we serve!

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