

Protecting Your Dairy from New World Screwworm

August 2025



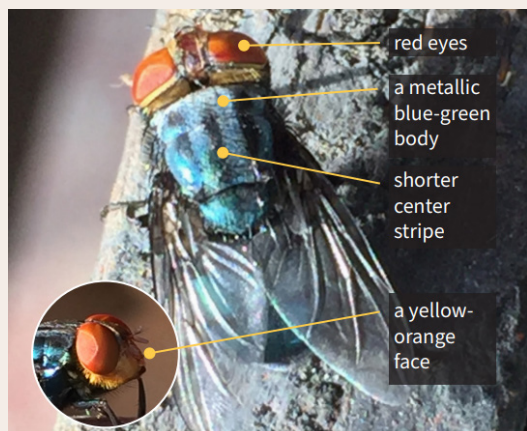
New World Screwworm (NWS) is a dangerous pest that can affect livestock and other warm-blooded animals. Adult NWS flies lay eggs in open wounds. The larvae, often called maggots, burrow deeper into the wound, using sharp mouth hooks to eat the living tissue of the host animal. NWS feeds on living tissue instead of dead tissue, so untreated wounds will grow and attract more flies until there is no living tissue left. This is a painful, often deadly pest that is difficult to contain.

Though NWS was eradicated from the U.S. in the 1960's, recent outbreaks in Mexico and Central America have increased the risk of re-introduction into the United States.

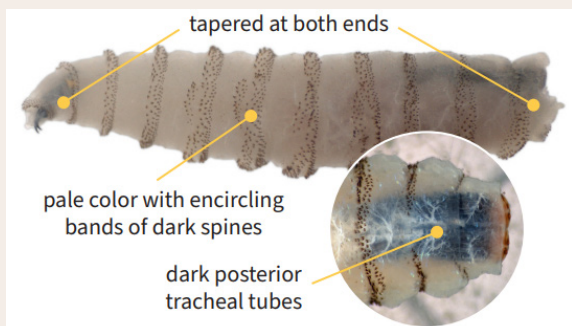
NWS updates can be found at: www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm

How to Identify New World Screwworm

The adult screwworm fly is about the size of a common housefly (or slightly larger), with orange eyes, a metallic blue or green body, and three dark stripes along its back.¹



NWS larvae are a pale color with encircling bands of dark spines.



What to Look for in Your Herd

NWS flies are attracted to wounds. Animals that have recently given birth, suffered an injury, or had a surgical procedure (such as dehorning or branding) are most at risk.¹ Untreated umbilical cords of newborn animals and foot lesions are commonly infested sites, as are tick bites.

Watch for symptoms:

- Presence of fly larvae (maggots) in wounds or other body openings, such as the nose, ears, and genitalia or the navel of newborn animals
- Wounds with bloody discharge and foul odor
- Signs of pain including depression, irritability, head shaking, not eating, and isolation
- The smell of decay

Producers who suspect a case of NWS infestation should immediately quarantine affected animals and report the case to their local veterinarian, State Animal Health Official or USDA.

State Animal Health Officials

usaha.org/saho

USDA-APHIS Veterinary Services

www.aphis.usda.gov/contact/animal-health

Prevention and Treatment

If there is a suspected NWS outbreak in your area, do what you can to prevent spreading:

- If possible and appropriate, delay performing wounding procedures such as dehorning or disbudding, branding, shearing, ear notching, and castration.
- Inspect animal housing, handling, and milking facilities to remove any sharp objects which may injure dairy cattle.
- Take measures to prevent other wound-causing pests, such as ticks.
- Immediately treat all wounds with approved insecticides.

Animals suspected of NWS infestation should have their wounds treated with EPA-approved insecticides at 2- to 3-day intervals and remain in quarantine until the wounds are healed.

Currently, there are no animal drugs approved by the FDA for the treatment or prevention of NWS infestation in animals. Veterinarians may prescribe the use of FDA-approved products for uses that are not on the label, in accordance with the existing regulations with a valid veterinary/client/patient relationship.⁴ Talk to your veterinarian about your treatment options.

Typical livestock insecticide treatments may not contain an NWS outbreak because of the difficulty in targeting wildlife for treatment. In the past, the only way outbreaks have been controlled is by sterilizing male flies, known as the sterile insect technique (SIT).

FOLLOW MEAT & MILK WITHDRAWAL TIMES

All treatment options are subject to meat and milk withdrawal times for both lactating and non-lactating cattle.

Extra-label treatments may have long milk or meat withdrawal times of up to 60 days or longer, depending on the treatment used.

Be sure to keep milk from treated cows out of the bulk tank for as long as the treatment label or your veterinarian recommends, even if it tests negative.

Quarantine and Stop Movement

Quarantines and movement controls are effective measures to prevent the spread of infestation.⁵

Quarantine stops the movement of infested animals and movement control regulates animal movement in specific areas. If NWS outbreak occurs:

- USDA may impose a federal quarantine and restrict interstate commerce from infested states.⁵
- State quarantines may be placed on individual infested animals or premises with infested animals.⁵
- USDA or state governments may require permits for any livestock movements within and out of infested areas to contain the spread.⁵

More Resources



The Food Animal Residue Avoidance Databank (FARAD) helps determine safe withdrawal times for drugs and other substances used in food-producing animals. Learn more at farad.org.



Livestock producers will need to work together to protect against NWS. Check out this National Cattleman's Beef Association fact sheet for other NWS information. www.ncba.org/Media/NCBA2025/Docs/newworldscrewwormfactsheet-arms042825-04.pdf

¹ www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/bro-new-world-screwworm.pdf

² www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm/outbreak-central-america

³ www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/nws-pest-card.pdf

⁴ www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/safety-health/animal-drugs-new-world-screwworm

⁵ www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/nws-myciasis-disease-strategy.pdf