

# NRCS Resources for New World Screwworm Preparedness and Response



The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical assistance to restore, enhance, and preserve the Nation's productive landscapes and natural resources. NRCS assists farmers, ranchers, and landowners with conservation planning, design and implementation of conservation practices, and in some cases provides financial assistance. NRCS can provide producers with technical assistance and resources to reduce the potential for New World Screwworm (NWS) establishment and risk of infestation and spread, while complementing and supporting APHIS's regulatory and operational response. Integrating NRCS conservation practices and activities can enhance farm readiness, protect livestock health, and strengthen national biosecurity.

## Conservation Practices and Activities to Consider

**Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity Feral Swine Damage Assessment (Code 297).** Manage and detect where feral swine are present, guiding NWS surveillance as feral swine are highly susceptible to NWS and they are a potential reservoir for NWS establishment and spread.

**Access Control (Code 472).** Controlling access for the purpose of excluding animals can reduce movement of infested animals, prevent exposure to high-risk areas, and limit contact with wildlife.

**Animal Mortality Facility (Code 316).** Appropriate handling and disposal of carcasses can reduce odors that attract flies and reduce larva development in animal tissue (although the NWS flies prefer live tissue). This will help disrupt the NWS fly production cycle but won't necessarily prevent infestation in live animals.

**Brush Management (Code 314).** Cleaning and thinning brush enhancing vegetative cover and wildlife habitat can reduce habitat for flies by improving airflow and creating an environment unfavorable to flies.

**Grazing Management (Code 528).** Facilitate livestock movement and monitoring based on NWS response movement requirements, as part of an integrated plan to support continuity of business.

**Livestock Shelter Structure (Code 576).** Improve distribution of grazing animals to enhance wildlife habitat, reduce over-used areas, or correct other resource concerns resulting from improper animal distribution that would attract flies, provide breeding habitat, or encourage infestation.

**Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595).** Monitoring and scouting pests to reduce injury to livestock.

Visit the New World Screwworm (NWS) website at [screwworm.gov](http://screwworm.gov) to learn more.

### Surveillance and Reservoir Management

Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CEMA) Feral Swine Damage Assessment (Code 297)

### Growth Environment

Brush Management (Code 314)  
Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595)

### Response and Recovery

Animal Mortality (Code 316)  
Emergency Animal Mortality Management (Code 368)

### Breeding Environment

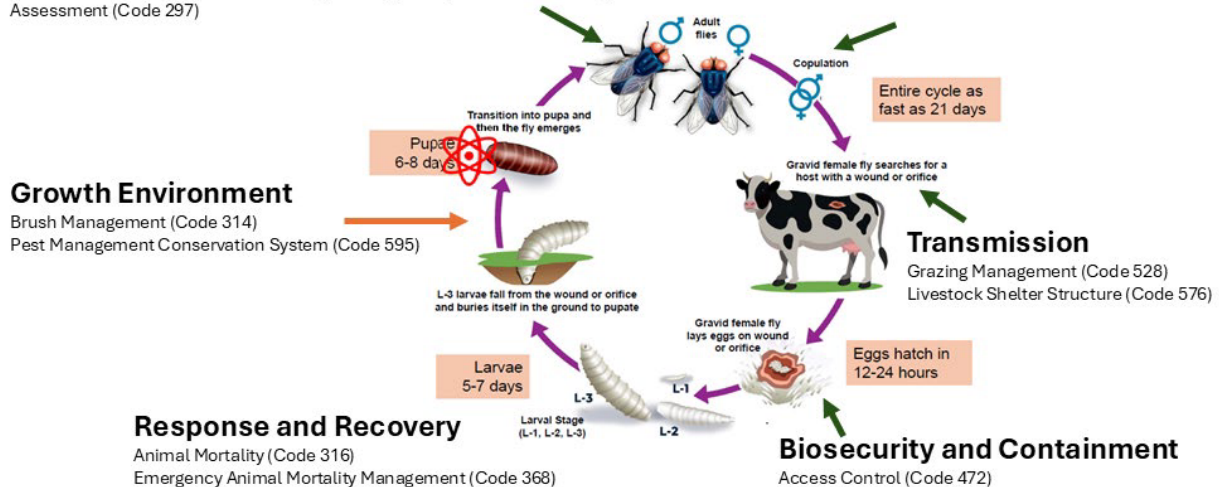
Brush Management (Code 314)  
Pest Management Conservation System (Code 595)

### Transmission

Grazing Management (Code 528)  
Livestock Shelter Structure (Code 576)

### Biosecurity and Containment

Access Control (Code 472)



Lifecycle graphic visual only: Adapted from Gleeson Murphy, APHIS

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# New World Screwworm

*(Cochliomyia hominivora)*

New World screwworm (NWS) is a serious pest that affects livestock, pets, wildlife, and, less commonly, people and birds. Adult screwworm flies are about the size of a common housefly or slightly larger. Their larvae feed on the living tissue of warm-blooded animals. Untreated screwworm infestations can be fatal to livestock, wildlife, and humans. Not controlling the pest in a livestock population can damage a country's economy.

## Distribution

NWS is endemic in Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and countries in South America.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) eradicated NWS from the United States in 1966. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) also eliminated a small outbreak in the Florida Keys in 2017.

In 2023, APHIS confirmed an unprecedented number of NWS cases in Panama. Since then, cases have been detected in every Central American country and Mexico.

## Description

Adult screwworm flies have orange eyes, a metallic blue or green body, and three dark stripes along their backs. The center stripe begins partway down the backside and appears shorter than the outer stripes.

Screwworm larvae (maggots) burrow into a wound, feeding as they go like a screw driving into wood. The maggots

cause extensive damage by tearing at the hosts' tissue with sharp mouth hooks. The wound becomes deeper and larger as more maggots hatch and feed on living tissue.

## Infestations

Screwworm infestations begin when a female fly lays eggs on a wound or body opening. Eggs hatch into larvae that burrow into the wound and feed on living tissue.

This pest can infest a wide variety of wounds, from tick bites to cuts and dehorning or branding wounds. Infestations are very common in the navels of newborn animals and the genital regions of their mothers.

## Impact

NWS can threaten the livelihood of livestock producers. It can cause millions of dollars' worth of production losses and economic damage. Screwworms also pose a threat to humans in infested areas.

## What You Can Do

Immediately report signs of screwworm to your local veterinarian, State veterinarian's office, or USDA ([www.aphis.usd.gov/contact/nimble](http://www.aphis.usd.gov/contact/nimble)). Look for the following signs in warm-blooded animals (including pets and birds):

- Maggots or white egg masses in wounds or body openings, such as the nose, ears, genitalia, or the navel of newborn animals



Adult screwworm fly

- Foul odor or the smell of decay
- Signs of pain including irritated behavior, depression, not eating, and isolating themselves from other animals or people

If you travel with a pet to regions affected by screwworm, know the requirements for returning to the United States. Go to [www.aphis.usd.gov/pet-travel/another-country-to-us-import](http://www.aphis.usd.gov/pet-travel/another-country-to-us-import) for more information.

## Learn More

For more information about screwworm, including the NWS outbreak in Central America and Mexico, go to [screwworm.gov](http://screwworm.gov).

For information on how screwworms affect people or to report suspected human cases, visit [www.cdc.gov/new-world-screwworm/about/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/new-world-screwworm/about/index.html).

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