

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
2025– PAHAN –811– 10-08 - ADV
New World Screwworm Outbreak in Mexico and Central America



DATE:	10/08/2025
TO:	Health Alert Network
FROM:	Debra L. Bogen, MD, FAAP, Secretary of Health
SUBJECT:	New World Screwworm Outbreak in Mexico and Central America
DISTRIBUTION:	Statewide
LOCATION:	Statewide
STREET ADDRESS:	n/a
COUNTY:	n/a
MUNICIPALITY:	n/a
ZIP CODE:	n/a

This transmission is a “Health Advisory,” which provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

HOSPITALS: PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, PEDIATRIC, INFECTION CONTROL, NURSING AND LABORATORY STAFF IN YOUR HOSPITAL; **EMS COUNCILS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **FQHCs:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **LOCAL HEALTH JURISDICTIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE AS APPROPRIATE; **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:** PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP; **LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES:** PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL MEDICAL, INFECTION CONTROL, AND NURSING STAFF IN YOUR FACILITY.

Summary

- New World Screwworm (NWS) is a parasitic fly whose larvae feed on living tissue and can infest mammals and birds; it largely affects livestock but can also affect pets, wildlife, and humans.
- There have been increased detections of NWS in southern Mexico and Central America, where it was previously eradicated.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently [announced](#) the identification of a travel-associated case of NWS infestation in a U.S. resident who traveled to El Salvador.
- NWS has not been found in livestock, pets, wildlife or in the environment in the United States (U.S.). In addition, no locally acquired cases of NWS infestation in humans were reported to date.
- The risk to human health in the U.S. remains very low.
- Individuals who traveled to areas where NWS is [present](#) in the past 10 days should contact a health care provider if they experience signs of myiasis (parasitic infestation with fly larvae [maggots]).
- Health care providers who identify myiasis in a patient should ask about recent travel to a country where NWS is present and notify the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) or local health department.
- Suspected cases must be reported to DOH.
- If you have additional questions about this guidance, please contact DOH at 1-877- PA- HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) or your local health department.

NWS is a parasitic fly (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) whose larvae feed on living tissue and can infest mammals and birds. NWS largely affects livestock but can affect pets, wildlife, and humans. The adult fly is attracted to wounds or mucous membrane openings, where it will lay eggs. Wounds as small as a tick bite may attract a female fly to feed. One female can lay 200 to 300 eggs at a time and may lay up to 3,000 eggs during her lifespan. The larvae feed on healthy tissue, leading to pain, bloody discharge, and a foul-smelling odor from the site of infestation, with the potential for extensive tissue destruction and secondary bacterial infections. NWS is not directly contagious between animals or humans, as animals and humans are infested by adult flies in the environment.

Historically, NWS was present in the southwestern and southeastern U.S., given subtropical climates that created a favorable environment for NWS to survive. NWS was eradicated from the U. S. in 1966 through coordinated fly-control programs but is endemic to South America, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Since 2023, its range has expanded northward from Panama, and it was detected in all countries in Central America and in southern Mexico. As of September 3, 2025, NWS was identified in animals in the following seven southern states in Mexico: Campeche, Chiapas, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, Veracruz, and Yucatan. In Central America and southern Mexico, there were more than 720 human cases, including 6 deaths, and more than 111,000 animal cases. On September 25, 2025, Mexico's National Service of Agro-Alimentary Health, Safety, and Quality confirmed a new cattle case of NWS located in the state of Nuevo León, less than 70 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border.

People at higher risk include:

- Those living in rural areas in regions or countries where NWS is endemic or in countries currently experiencing an outbreak, and where livestock are raised.
- People who frequently work with livestock.
- Anyone with open sores or wounds, including from recent surgery, as the flies will lay eggs on open sores.
- Vulnerable populations include people who are immunocompromised, are at extremes of age, and are experiencing malnutrition.

Health care providers should consider NWS in patients

- With visible larvae or egg masses in a wound, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, or other bodily orifice,
- With destruction of healthy tissue,
- Who report sensation of movement, foul odor, bloody discharge, swelling, and pain,
- Who report recent travel to regions where NWS is present.

Refer to the [USDA website](#) for the most up-to-date locations of NWS infestation in animals.

If a health care provider identifies myiasis in a patient, they should ask about recent travel to a country where NWS is present. These areas include countries that are currently experiencing an outbreak and those where it is endemic. Recent travel is considered travel in the 10 days before onset of clinical signs and symptoms.

Standard precautions should be used when treating wounds and handling larvae. Treatment is primarily through removal of all larvae from the affected site. Medications to treat or prevent secondary bacterial infections may be needed. There is no medication that can treat NWS infestation in people.

Collect all suspected NWS larvae and place them in a leak-proof container with 70% ethanol, or other alcohol (5 to 10% formalin is an acceptable alternative if alcohol is not available). Alcohol will kill the larvae and preserve them for identification. After collecting the larvae, call DOH or your local health department to arrange testing and evaluation. Do not dispose of the larvae without speaking to DOH or your local health department.

Never discard live larvae in the trash, as larvae that are not appropriately disposed of can develop into adult flies, establish a local fly population, and promote further spread within the U.S. Larvae should be placed in a sealed alcohol container and disposed of as biohazardous waste, not regular waste. Reexamine treated lesions after 24-48 hours to confirm that no live larvae remain.

There are many morphologically similar species of flies that can cause myiasis, and diagnostic confirmation can be conducted at CDC.

All suspected **human** cases must be immediately reported to DOH at 717-787-3350 or the local health department.

All suspected **domestic animal** cases must be immediately reported to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at 717-772-2852, option 1.

All suspected **wild animal** cases must be immediately reported to the Pennsylvania Game Commission at 833-PGC-WILD.

If you have additional questions about this guidance, please contact DOH at 1-877- PA- HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) or your local health department.

Individuals interested in receiving future PA-HANs can register at: <https://ondemand.mir3.com/han-pa-gov/login/>.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.

This information is current as of October 8, 2025 but may be modified in the future.