
RESOLUTION NUMBER: 27 APPROVED AS AMENDED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON PARASITIC AND VECTOR BORNE DISEASES

SUBJECT MATTER: New World Screwworm Eradication

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

New World screwworm (NWS) (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*), a parasitic fly that produces larvae that feeds on living tissue of animals, livestock, and humans, was successfully eradicated from the United States (U.S.) in 1966, through cooperative efforts of federal and state governments and animal health officials, livestock producers, and veterinary practitioners. Eradication efforts cost stakeholders tens of millions of dollars. Today, freedom from NWS provides approximately \$1 billion in direct benefits to livestock producers and approximately \$3.7 billion in benefits to the general economy annually. These benefits include increased production of meat and milk; decreased death losses, veterinary costs, medication costs, and labor costs in livestock production; and increased health status of wildlife populations. Additionally, freedom from NWS mitigates the public health impact of the pest.

Since 1966, NWS eradication programs continued to successfully push this detrimental pest progressively south through Mexico and Central America. In 2000, eradication of NWS was achieved in Panama, north of the Darien Gap, creating the “barrier” for NWS from entering Central and North America. NWS continue to be considered endemic in Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and South America. Between 2000 and 2023, reintroductions of the pest occurred in NWS free areas of Central and North America, including an outbreak in the Florida Keys in 2016-17. These reintroductions were successfully eradicated through continued use of the sterile insect technique.

In the summer of 2023, NWS re-emerged in Costa Rica. In February 2024, Costa Rica declared a NWS national emergency due to the increasing case counts and expanding geographic distribution. Since February, NWS was detected in Nicaragua and most recently in Honduras. Given the NWS fly’s ability to travel long distances, the ease with which NWS larvae are moved by infested wildlife and livestock, and the rapid progression of NWS into free areas, the threat of reintroduction of the pest into the US is markedly increased. The increased threat posed by the recent NWS outbreaks warranted the release of \$109.8 million in emergency funds by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in December 2023 to aid in preventing the spread of the pest into North America. USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), International Services has instituted an incident command group to address the situation in Central America

and efforts have been increased to get ahead of the northern movement of NWS utilizing air drops of sterile flies from planes and ground dispersal chambers in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

NWS eradication is accomplished by the sterile insect technique which involves the mass-rearing and sterilization, using radiation of a target pest, followed by the systematic area-wide release of the sterile males by air or ground over defined areas, where they mate with wild females resulting in no offspring and a declining pest population. Since the outbreak of NWS began in summer 2023, more than 4.5 billion sterile flies have been released. Current sterile fly production is approximately 95 million flies per week and maximum sterile fly production capacity is 100 million flies per week. Total costs of eradication efforts to this point exceed \$54 million.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States (U.S.) Congress to appropriate annual funding to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), International Services to support and enhance ongoing new world screwworm (NWS) eradication efforts in Central America, to include funding for measures such as increasing sterile fly production and release capabilities, until the pest is pushed south of the Darien Gap in Panama.

USAHA requests USDA-APHIS to perform a risk assessment for the reintroduction, control, and eradication of NWS infestation in the US as soon as practical to provide updated information for refining mitigation and response strategies and projecting economic impacts and costs.

USAHA requests that USDA-APHIS conduct training and outreach regarding NWS surveillance and eradication at all southern ports of entry through collaboration with other federal agencies, such as US Customs and Border Protection, to mitigate the threat of reintroduction of the pest through increased awareness and, consequently, earlier detection of potential NWS reintroduction. Additionally, USAHA urges USDA-APHIS to prioritize updating NWS outreach materials and production and distribution of no-cost ectoparasite collection kits to increase stakeholder awareness and promote surveillance.

FINAL RESPONSE:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

To protect domestic animal health, APHIS has taken the following actions.

- APHIS has long-standing import controls in place for regulated live animal species coming from or transiting through screwworm-affected countries (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-9/chapter-I/subchapter-D/part-93>). A list of regions

APHIS recognizes as affected by screwworm can be found on the [USDA APHIS Animal Health Status of Regions website](#). Specific information about live animal import requirements for all species regulated by APHIS VS can be found at: www.aphis.usda.gov/live-animal-import.

- APHIS is closely monitoring detections of NWS in Mexico, including the confirmed cases north of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. There have been no detections in animals in the United States associated with this incursion northward from Mexico. APHIS has heightened preparedness and planning measures in collaboration with our Mexican counterparts (SENASICA).
- APHIS continues to conduct training and outreach regarding NWS surveillance and eradication to stakeholders, including the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program, Texas Animal Health Commission, Southern Border Ports, and Veterinary Services (VS) staff stationed near or on the Southern Border with Mexico. APHIS is also conducting enhanced outreach and training opportunities for producers, veterinarians, and other stakeholders, which includes recognizing signs of NWS and reporting suspected cases.
- APHIS has a strong collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on NWS. Together, both agencies met with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to extend support, review protocols, and provide training materials.
- APHIS has prioritized NWS outreach materials with posted updates of fact sheets and brochures in English and Spanish, a new economic impact estimate, updates of the Central American outbreak on a revised webpage (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm>). Furthermore, APHIS has successfully distributed the first round of ectoparasite collection kits to Southern Border responders, and the National Veterinary Services Laboratories has developed quick-reference NWS identification flashcards and a limited training slide deck for NWS and non-target arthropod identification.
- On July 9, 2025, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced the suspension of live cattle, horse, and bison imports through U.S. ports of entry along the southern border due to the continued and rapid northward spread of New World Screwworm (NWS) in Mexico, effective immediately.
- On August 15, 2025, Secretary of Agriculture Rollins announced a major USDA initiative to further combat NWS. The plan includes a \$100 million investment in new technologies; construction of a sterile fly production facility in Edinburg, TX; enhanced border surveillance with mounted patrols and detector dogs; strengthened collaboration with Mexico to contain the pest; and continued food safety inspections to prevent NWS from entering the U.S. food supply. A key part of the Secretary's comprehensive five-part plan to strengthen USDA's efforts to detect, control, and eliminate NWS is enhanced trapping along the U.S.–Mexico border to monitor for the pest. VS is partnering with Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California agriculture officials to conduct fly trapping and animal surveillance on the southern border with Mexico. This added layer of surveillance complements Mexico's ongoing eradication efforts, helping to protect U.S. livestock, pets, and other animals.