OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

New World Screwworm

INFORMATION FOR LIVESTOCK OWNERS

August 2025

New World screwworm (NWS) is a parasitic fly that infests warm-blooded animals and can cause significant financial losses for cattle producers. The female lays eggs in wounds, and the hatching larvae eat living tissue and can lead to death of the animal. NWS was eradicated from the United States in 1966 and periodically returns. The flies re-established in North America in 2023 and now threaten the U.S. southern border.

Closeup of an adult New World screwworm fly

Closeup of a New World screwworm larva, showing mouth hooks

Closeup of two New World screwworm larvae
Photos courtesy of USDA

How to Recognize New World Screwworm

Wounds as small as a tick bite can be infested with NWS, and they are more likely to be around the face and genitals. Animals will be off-feed, painful, and often exhibit scratching and head shaking. Infested wounds may smell like dead carcass, have dripping bloody discharge or pus, and may suddenly get bigger. The ridged larvae can get up to 17 mm (2/3 in) long and generally burrow too deep to see but they may be visible. White eggs may be seen along the edges of the wound. The flies are the size of a typical house fly with orange eyes and green iridescent bodies.

How to Prevent New World Screwworm

- Wound prevention: delay dehorning, branding, castration, shearing, and vaccination until after fly season
- Inspect pens for sharp objects
- Treat for ticks
- Treat wounds promptly, including the umbilical stump of young animals. Use fly spray and bandage when possible
- Closely monitor the herd for wounds around face and genitals

If You Suspect New World Screwworm

Contact your veterinarian, and report to the ODA State Veterinarian at 503.986.4711

What to Expect if Infestation is Confirmed

Animal health officials will quarantine the animal until daily wound care and treatments with larvicides and insecticides have successfully eliminated the screwworm larvae. The USDA and ODA will investigate the case to determine if additional control measures of environmental treatment or sterile fly release is warranted. Treatment does not include destruction of livestock. The animal(s) may be released from quarantine when it is confirmed that no screwworm larvae remain.