

New World Screwworm Myiasis



View of the underside of a New World screwworm larva (maggot), highlighting the mandibles (mouth parts) at the end of the body (left side in this image).



The New World screwworm fly have orange eyes, a metallic blue or green body, and three darker stripes along their backs. *Image courtesy of Denise Bonilla, U.S. Department of Agriculture.*

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

[New World screwworm \(NWS\) myiasis](#) is typically a disease of livestock but can also affect other animals, pets, and humans. Several countries in Central America are reporting cases of NWS in both animals and people. If you live, work, or spend an extended amount of time with (or near) livestock or other warm-blooded animals in these areas, you could be at a higher risk for NWS.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

The screwworm flies are attracted to and lay their eggs on and in open wounds. They can also lay eggs in your nose, eyes, or mouth. Wounds as small as a tick bite may attract female flies to feed and lay eggs.

Symptoms can include

- Feeling maggots (larvae) moving within a skin wound or sore, nose, mouth, or eyes.
- Seeing maggots around or in open sores.
- Painful skin wounds or sores.
- Unexplained skin wounds or sores that do not heal or worsen over time.
- Bleeding from open sores.
- A foul-smelling odor from the site of the infestation.

Bacteria can also infect wounds where New World screwworm maggots are present and may cause fever or chills.

PREVENTION

- Keep wounds or sores clean and covered.
- If you have a wound or sore that won't heal or is getting worse, see your healthcare provider.
- Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants, and socks to limit areas where you could get bitten.
- Use an [EPA-registered insect repellent](#).
- Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin.
- Sleep indoors or in rooms with screens.

TREATMENT

If you see or feel maggots (larvae) in or on a wound or other area of your body, contact your healthcare provider immediately. They will need to remove the maggots, sometimes through surgery. Do not try to remove or dispose of the maggots yourself. Do not put any maggots directly into the trash. Instead, place them into an airtight container with a secure lid, and bring them to your healthcare provider. There are no FDA-approved medications to treat NWS, avoid taking any medication that says it will treat NWS.

