

New World Screwworm (NWS)

General Information

Purpose: This document provides guidance for information about NWS

1. What is NWS?

NWS is a parasitic fly that causes infestation in humans and warm-blooded animals. The fly lays eggs on a wound or mucous membrane of the animal. After the eggs hatch, the larvae (maggots) feed on live tissues of the animal.

2. What is the concern about NWS?

- NWS larvae feed on live tissue of mammals, causing severe and sometimes fatal wounds.
- NWS threatens agriculture business with massive losses (i.e. animal mortality, financial costs).
- Humans are at risk of infestation.
- The parasite is moving closer to the southern United States border.

3. What are the symptoms of NWS infestation?

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

4. What do I do if I see or feel maggots (larvae) in or on a wound or other area of my body?

- Seek medical care immediately.
- Do not attempt to remove the larvae or egg masses without medical assistance.
- Do not throw any larvae or eggs into the trash or outside on the ground as this could result in NWS spreading in the area. If maggots or eggs fall out of the wound, submerge them
- 70% alcohol in a leak-proof container and bring them to your healthcare provider.
- Notify your local health department.

5. Is NWS contagious?

- NWS is not contagious. It is not spread directly from one person or animal to another.
- NWS is spread via movement of infested animals and the flight of adult female flies.

6. Who is at risk for NWS infestation?

Persons who are in an area where the flies are present, and:

- Spend time outdoors, especially if sleeping or unable to keep flies away.
- Have open wounds, including small breaks in the skin from scratch or insect bites.
- Have a medical condition that causes bleeding or open sores.

7. How can I protect myself from NWS infestation?

- Keep open wounds clean and covered.
- Sleep indoors or in screened shelters.
- Wear socks and loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Use an EPA-registered insect repellent.
- Treat clothing/gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin.

8. What do I do if I suspect an NWS infestation?

- In Humans, contact your healthcare provider (see 4. Above).
- In Pets, contact your veterinarian.
- In Livestock, contact your veterinarian and the [WV Department of Agriculture](#) at (304) 558-2214.
- In Wildlife, contact [WV Division of Natural Resources](#) at (304) 558-6200.

9. How can I find out about the current status of NWS in West Virginia and the United States?

- In West Virginia, for information about:
 - Humans: visit [WV OEPS New World Screwworm](#).
 - Livestock and Pets: contact [WV Department of Agriculture](#).
 - Wild Animals: visit [WV Division of Natural Resources](#).
- The [CDC](#) and [USDA](#) provide the latest update on the status of NWS in the United States.

10. What is the West Virginia Department of Health (WV DH) doing?

The WV DH is working with state and federal partners to prepare, investigate, and respond to NWS.