

New World Screwworm in Animals - Information for Veterinarians

Notice for Readers: This information should not be considered official federal government policy, rather it is presented to be used for education and awareness.

Disease Background

- New World screwworm (NWS) (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) are parasitic flies that cause severe infestations in warm blooded animals, like livestock (including horses), companion animals, wildlife, occasionally birds and, in rare cases, people
- NWS is a federally Immediately Notifiable Disease under schedule VII of the Health of Animals Regulations and laboratories are required to immediately notify the CFIA of an identification or suspicion of NWS
- Movements of animals infested with larvae into Canada, from countries experiencing outbreaks, is the most likely opportunity for introduction of the pest
- NWS flies are not present in Canada. Canada's climate is generally not suitable for the long-term establishment of these flies, particularly during the winter months. However, it is possible for the pest to have a seasonal presence in some areas during the summer months.
- While cases in humans have been reported in Mexico and other South American countries, there has never been a domestically acquired case in Canada. Screwworm infestations are primarily an animal health concern and are not a food safety risk.
- New World Screwworm was recently identified in the United States (Texas and New Mexico) after decades of freedom from the disease. It has never been detected in animals in Canada.
- A dashboard identifying the cases in the US can be accessed at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animals/animal-health/livestock-and-poultry-disease/current-status/us-confirmed-cases-new-world>

CFIA Actions in response to NWS

- Canada has implemented import restrictions on livestock (including horses) from Mexico and the state of Texas. <https://www.canada.ca/en/food-inspection-agency/news/2026/06/the-canadian-food-inspection-agency-implements-disease-control-measures-to-prevent-spread-of-new-world-screwworm.html>
- Detailed information regarding animal importation requirements may be found at: <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/diseases/immediately-notifiable/screwworm/import-restrictions>

Precautions to Prevent Infection if Travelling with Animals

It is recommended that veterinarians counsel producers, animal owners, rescue organizations, and others who travel with or transport animals about the risks of traveling to or from NWS affected countries.

- Discuss NWS risk factors to help producers and owners make informed decisions about traveling with their animal(s).
- Discuss the importance of understanding the state or country requirements for animals for entry and transit, as well as those for returning to Canada.
- Recommend pre- and post-travel veterinary exams, with particular attention to wound management and other sites of risk e.g. skin folds, eyes, ears, mouth, perianal and genital areas, areas of excessive licking etc.
 - Consider delaying travel if any medical or surgical procedures have been conducted that compromise the skin barrier that create locations that are attractive to parasitic flies (e.g. castration/neutering, spaying, cesarean sections, dehorning, branding, etc.)
 - Alternatively, if travel is imperative, consider delaying these procedures temporarily until after travel is completed.
- Educate on the signs of NWS infestation.

- Discuss options for prevention including medications that the animal caregivers can administer before travelling to infested regions or when returning to prevent NWS infestation.
- Suggest limiting the risk of trauma to the skin (abrasion, cuts etc.) of their animals while in affected areas and treat or cover wounds to reduce infestation.

Diagnosing animals

- Clinical signs of infestation may include:
 - Behavioral signs such as excessive licking or scratching at an infested wound
 - Wounds (cuts, surgical sites, bite wounds) that grow rapidly and fail to heal
 - Foul-smelling discharge
 - Wounds that demonstrate visible larvae (worm-like immature stage of the flies)
- NWS may be suspected based on clinical signs; however, official diagnosis can be confirmed only with laboratory evaluation. Other species of flies that are present in Canada can infest wounds or mucous membranes of animals and result in infestations that are similar in appearance.
- If a veterinarian suspects NWS, samples should be submitted for evaluation immediately. Veterinarians can reach out to their local CFIA district office for information on sample submission procedures.

Treating animals

- If a CFIA laboratory confirms that the infestation is NWS, animals will be quarantined by CFIA and the infestation treated. Animal owners should work with their private veterinarian to determine which treatment is most appropriate. Additional measures may be imposed on the animal or location where the animal resides.
- Infested animals should be isolated in a location where any maggots that leave the wound can be found and the maggots destroyed. Maggots should be prevented from entering the environment (soil). Animal caregivers should consult a veterinarian for wound care options in pets and livestock.
- Treatment options are available for off (or extra-) label drug use (Note: pesticides cannot be used off-label).

Note: There are no approved products in Canada that include a label claim for NWS. Information on veterinary products that could be considered for use in domestic animals in an off-label manner can be found [here](#). The [Compendium of Veterinary Products](#) can then be used to determine if products are approved for use in Canada. Additional drugs may be available through Health Canada's [emergency drug release program](#), and additional pesticides could be made available through the emergency registration process. Consult with your provincial / territorial regulatory body for guidance on off-label drug use. The CVMA has a position statement on [extra-label drug use](#) that outlines considerations for veterinarians.