



## **Alert to Equine Practitioners: New World Screwworm Enters the United States**

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**Situation summary.** The USDA has reported the first case of New World Screwworm (NWS) in cattle in the United States in south Texas.

NWS is a serious threat because larvae **infest living tissue** and cause rapidly progressive, potentially fatal myiasis (maggot infestation) in warm-blooded animals, including humans. Federal and state animal health officials have emphasized the critical need for heightened awareness, active surveillance, and rapid reporting of suspect cases.

**Why this matters for equine practitioners?** Horses are susceptible to NWS infestation. Horses at higher risk are those with wounds, recent surgical sites, tick bite sites and foals with fresh umbilical sites, however all horses are susceptible as NWS infestation can also occur at mucocutaneous junctions. Female flies are attracted to the smell of very small breaks in the skin (i.e. tick bite) or moist body openings, where eggs may be deposited. Larvae hatch and burrow into living tissue, enlarging the wound and causing pain, tissue destruction, secondary bacterial infection, toxemia, and in severe untreated cases, death.

**Clinical signs and lesion sites of concern.** Superficial wounds, castration sites, lacerations, tick or insect bite sites, hoof-related injuries, the prepuce, vulva, nostrils, lips, ears, periocular tissues, and foal umbilici are all common sites for screwworm infestation. Maintain a high index of suspicion for wounds that are enlarging, draining, foul-smelling, painful, or nonhealing. Visible larvae or egg masses at wound margins should be treated as an urgent diagnostic and reporting concern.

**Immediate actions for practitioners.** If NWS is suspected, immediately contact the appropriate state animal health official (<https://equinediseasecc.org/report-a-disease>) or USDA veterinarian who will provide sampling and testing guidance in accordance with the standard USDA protocols. (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/aphis-sop-detection-nws-in-animals.pdf>) The animal should be immediately isolated and a complete and careful

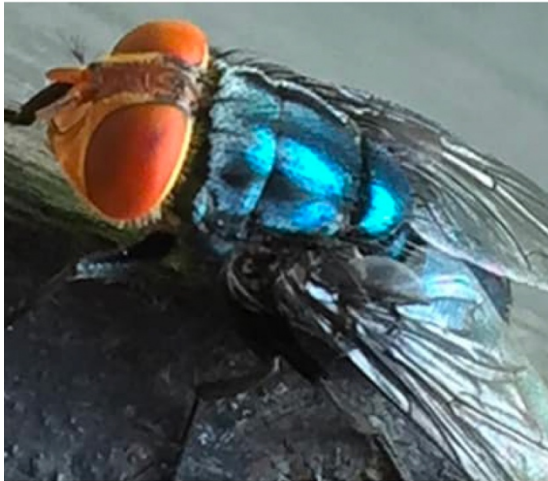
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examination and collection of all larvae in accordance with state guidance is critical. Early recognition and rapid response are critical to preventing establishment of NWS in the area.

**Advice to Clients:** With NWS now diagnosed in Texas cattle, it's time for increased vigilance by horse owners. Practitioners should alert owners to the potential of screwworm incursion and need for frequent inspection of horses and immediate reporting of any wound or body opening with discharge or evidence of larvae. As always, premises fly control with foggers, misters, traps, and fly parasites can control the fly population as well as ensuring manure is frequently removed and the premises remains free of standing water and debris.

For more additional information or resources including current status updates visit USDA Screwworm Website at [www.Screwworm.gov](http://www.Screwworm.gov)

For owner new world screwworm factsheet visit <https://www.equinediseasecc.org/new-world-screwworm>



Adult screwworm



Screwworm larva