



### Surveillance

 

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) is conducting a New World screwworm (NWS) Trapping Plan to boost the state’s defenses against the spread of this harmful livestock pest. The strategy emphasizes early detection and quick response by placing traps in key high-risk zones along the Texas-Mexico border and around major port regions.

Under the plan, TDA will place traps in the following areas:

1. Texas-Mexico Border: From the Maverick/Webb County line just west of Laredo to Brownsville
2. TDA Export Pens: Brownsville, Del Rio, El Paso, Laredo, and Houston.
3. Port Regions: Surrounding areas in Galveston and Corpus Christi.

Traps, such as Red Delta Traps, Black Delta Traps, and black PVC traps, will be installed in accordance with the NWS Response Fly Surveillance and Site Selection Methods. Each trap will be documented and monitored, including photographic records of its condition.

Traps will be inspected weekly. Any flies collected will be sorted and initially identified by TDA personnel. Suspect samples will be packaged with the appropriate USDA form and sent for confirmation to the USDA’s National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) Parasite Identification Lab.

Reporting and oversight will consist of weekly trapping reports prepared by TDA regional staff members and sent via email to the NWS Task Force. This coordinated



approach facilitates the quick exchange of information and enhances response readiness.

### **Suspect New World Screwworm in Your Cattle?**

It's critical to regularly check livestock for signs of New World screwworm (NWS) infestation, including:

- A foul odor similar to rotting tissue.
- Visible larvae burrowing in wounds.
- Unusual or abnormal wounds on livestock or wildlife.

If you suspect NWS, even if you're uncertain, report it right away. Prompt reporting enables quick responses and containment. Work closely with your veterinarian to treat the affected animal and protect the rest of the herd, and always follow their recommended treatment plan.

Early detection is the best defense. Any delay in reporting can lead to rapid spread and widespread infestation. While short-term movement restrictions may be necessary to control an outbreak, the long-term consequences of an established NWS population would be far more damaging to the livestock industry.

### **TDA Biosecurity Enforcement Response**

Texas has stepped up its readiness and mitigation efforts in response to the northward spread of NWS from southern Mexico. Key actions include the launch of a trapping and surveillance plan: Commissioner Sid Miller has ordered traps in high-risk zones along the Texas-Mexico border, at export pens, and near ports in order to detect incipient infestations early.

In addition, Texas is pushing for quicker regulatory approval of treatment options, more innovation around detection (traps, lures) and prevention, and working in partnership with Mexico to slow the pest's advance.

Click [here](#) to view the agency one-pager summarizing our efforts.

### **TDA Swormlure**

Developed in collaboration with a private company, Commissioner Sid Miller's Biosecurity team has deployed TDA Swormlure, a cutting-edge attractant built with a proprietary polymer and chemical blend. Unlike traditional surveillance methods, Swormlure can be rapidly scaled across Texas, representing an innovative and proactive step. The plan is that once approved, the attractant will be combined with an approved pesticide bait that can be deployed with TDA Swormlure in Mexico and the United States.





### About New World screwworm

The New World screwworm (NWS, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*) is a parasitic fly originally found in the Western Hemisphere. It lays its eggs in the living tissue of open wounds on warm-blooded animals. Once hatched, the larvae feed on the host's flesh, creating severe injuries that can be fatal if not treated.

The pest was eliminated from the U.S. in the 1960s but occasionally reappears, with recent activity reported in parts of Central America and Mexico. Control efforts rely on releasing sterile male flies—a method known as the sterile insect technique (SIT)—combined with active surveillance and routine livestock inspections. This strategy has proven to be highly effective at keeping outbreaks in check.



### Contact

If you have specific questions or require assistance, please contact the Texas Department of Agriculture's Hotline at 1-800-TELL-TDA.



## Resources

📞 Contacts



### NEW WORLD SCREWWORM

Screwworm are flesh-eating maggots that feed on the living flesh of warm-blooded animals. Maggots cause extensive damage by tearing at the hosts' tissue with sharp mouth hooks. The wound can become larger and deepen as more maggots hatch and feed on living tissue. NWS can often cause deadly damage to the animal.



The name “screwworm” comes from the way the maggots feed, burrowing—or “screwing”—deeper into the wound as they consume living tissue. Using sharp mouth hooks, the larvae tear at the flesh, causing the wound to expand and worsen as more eggs hatch. Without prompt detection and treatment, this can lead to severe injury or even death of the affected animal.

Ongoing, routine monitoring of livestock is essential for maintaining herd and flock health and biosecurity.

Producers should watch closely for signs of possible infestation, including:

- Foul-smelling wounds with visible maggots
- Animals licking or biting at wounds
- Lesions around navels, ears, or at dehorning and branding sites
- Unusual restlessness or lethargy
- White maggots with protruding spines



For the New World screwworm, it's the larval stage that causes the most harm, leading to significant tissue damage and economic losses. Mature larvae can grow up to 17 mm (about 2/3 of an inch) long and have distinctive spiral bands of spines, which give the insect its name. Official identification relies on microscopic features, such as the presence or absence of paired internal breathing tubes, and must be confirmed by a trained specialist.

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