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PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORY

To: Health Care Providers
From: Dr. Isaac Benowitz, State Epidemiologist
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US CDC: New World Screwworm: Outbreak Moves into Northern Mexico

Please review this information from the U.S. CDC on the reemergence of New World Screwworm (NWS) in Northern Mexico, issued on January 20, 2026. It outlines key actions that clinicians can take to recognize, treat, and report cases of NWS myiasis. **As of January 27, 2026, there are no confirmed cases of locally-acquired NWS myiasis in Maine or elsewhere in the United States.** Clinicians should consider NWS in the differential for cases of myiasis in live tissue in a person who has traveled to an area where the NWS fly is endemic.

The NWS fly (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) is not present in Maine. The risk of myiasis caused by local infection in Maine is very low. Any patients in Maine with suspected NWS myiasis should be reported **immediately** to the Maine CDC by phone at 1-800-821-5821 under the “unusual illness of infectious cause” condition in the [Maine notifiable disease rules](#).

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services’ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC) can help coordinate specimen collection, diagnosis, and consultation with the U.S CDC on all suspected cases. Samples from **suspected human cases** should be sent to the Maine Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory (HETL). A completed HETL [Requisition Form](#) is required with all samples. Testing for NWS myiasis is not available through commercial laboratories.

Veterinarians with suspected animal cases should report their suspicion **immediately** to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry (DACF) at 207-287-3701 or USDA Veterinary Services at 1-866-536-7593 for assistance in specimen submission.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/new-world-screwworm and refer to the resources below.

Summary

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. CDC) is issuing this Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory to share information and notify clinicians, laboratories, veterinarians, and the public about recent New World screwworm (NWS) animal cases in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas, which shares a border with the U.S. state of Texas. No NWS infestations related to this outbreak have been identified in people or animals in the United States as of January 20, 2026. However, given the potential for geographic spread, U.S. CDC is issuing this Health Advisory to increase awareness of the outbreak and to summarize U.S. CDC recommendations for clinicians in the United States on case identification and reporting, specimen collection, diagnosis, and treatment of NWS, as well as guidance for the public.

Background

New World screwworm (NWS), “gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo” in Spanish, is a devastating pest. NWS myiasis occurs when NWS flies lay eggs in wounds or in other body cavities with mucus membranes, such as the nose, ears, eyes, or mouth. The eggs develop into parasitic larvae (maggots) that feed on and burrow into living flesh. Although they primarily affect livestock, such as cattle and horses, the flies can also lay eggs on people and other warm-blooded animals, both domestic and wildlife. Cases of NWS in people can be fatal if left untreated.

An [outbreak of NWS](#) infestations in people and animals has developed across Central America and Mexico. During this outbreak, more than 1,190 cases and seven deaths in people have been reported in Central America and Mexico as of January 20, 2026. [Mexico has reported 24 hospitalizations among people](#) and [601 active cases among animals](#). (An animal case is defined as “active” at the time of diagnosis and becomes inactive if officials verify the absence of new wounds or larvae after 15 days.) The Mexican state of Tamaulipas, which borders the U.S. state of Texas, reported [eight active animal cases](#). The NWS fly has not been detected in the United States and risk to people remains low. For more information about the more than 148,000 animals affected by the outbreak, please see [Current Status of New World Screwworm | Screwworm.gov](#).

NWS was previously a significant economic pest of livestock in the United States. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) developed an [eradication strategy](#) based on releasing sterile male flies. Since the female NWS fly only mates once in her 21-day lifespan, mating with a sterile male fly means any resulting eggs are not fertilized and no larvae can hatch. This strategy was successful in eradicating NWS from the United States, Mexico, and southward through Central America. The United States successfully used the strategy again in 2017 following a 2016 re-introduction of NWS into Key deer in the Florida Keys.

Since 2006, [animal health and agricultural officials](#) had maintained a biological barrier at the Darien Gap along the Panama and Colombia border, where sterile flies were continuously released to prevent reintroduction into Central America. In 2023, Panama reported a spike in cases of NWS—[more than 9,300 in one year](#). Unregulated cattle movement, increased movement through the Darien Gap, and new areas of farming contributed to rapid northward spread of NWS. In addition to this increased activity in Central America and Mexico, NWS has remained persistent in South America and the Caribbean, including in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

The USDA’s APHIS current strategy to control and re-eradicate NWS includes

1. Releasing sterile male flies.
2. Developing and enforcing animal movement controls.
3. Increasing passive and active surveillance, outreach, and education in impacted areas.

An additional and important part of this strategy includes rapid identification and appropriate clinical management of infestations in people. Timely public health response allows for prompt investigations and control measures to prevent onward spread outside of the area where sterile flies are being released. U.S. CDC is collaborating with federal, state, and local agencies and international organizations to assist with efforts to control the spread of NWS through public health action.

People might be at increased risk for developing NWS if they spend time in geographic areas where NWS flies are present and

- Have an open wound, including scratches, cuts, insect bites, or surgical wounds.
- Have a medical condition that might affect how quickly a wound heals or that may cause bleeding or open sores (e.g., skin cancer, psoriasis, or eczema).
- Are very old or very young.
- Experience malnutrition.
- Sleep outdoors, especially during daytime hours when NWS flies are more active.
- Live, work, or spend an extended amount of time near livestock or other warm-blooded animals in these areas.

Recommendations for Clinicians

Clinical presentation and guidance

- Consider NWS in people who present with any of the following:
 - Visible larvae or egg masses in a wound, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, or other body orifice (e.g., genitals).
 - Destruction of healthy tissue.
 - Sensation of movement, foul odor, bloody discharge, swelling, and pain.
 - Recent travel to [regions where NWS is present](#)
- In areas where NWS is present, advise patients to:
 - Clean and cover all wounds, no matter how small or the location on the body.
 - Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants, socks, and hats to limit exposed skin and use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-registered insect repellents](#).
 - If possible, avoid spending time where livestock are located or housed.
 - Avoid sleeping outdoors, especially during daytime hours when NWS flies are most active.
 - Use bed nets to protect sleeping quarters from insects if windows are left open and not screened. In hospitals, screening windows and doors is essential.

Reporting to public health

- **Immediately report all suspected human cases** to the Maine CDC by calling 1-800-821-5821, and work with Maine CDC to seek confirmatory diagnosis with U.S. CDC's Diagnostic Parasitology Lab (DPDx).
- Direct clinical inquiries and patient management-related questions to U.S. CDC's Parasitic Diseases Hotline (404-718-4745 or parasites@cdc.gov) during business hours, or to U.S. CDC's Emergency Operations Center (770-488-7100) after regular business hours.
- Non-clinical questions can be directed to newworldscrewworm@cdc.gov.

Patient management and specimen submission

- For patients with larval infestations in a lesion:
 - In consultation with the Maine CDC and U.S. CDC, collect and submit larvae from patients to U.S. CDC for clinical diagnosis and confirmation. Many morphologically similar species of flies can cause myiasis; submitting larvae is critical for species identification. Diagnostic confirmation for suspected human cases is available through [U.S. CDC's Diagnostic Parasitology Laboratory \(DPDx\)](#).

- Submit at least 10 larvae to U.S. CDC.
 - If you have fewer than 10 larvae, submit them all.
 - If multiple stages of larvae are present in the lesion, try to include a representative sample from each stage.
 - Email dpdx@cdc.gov for specimen submission instructions.
 - It may be possible to make a diagnosis more rapidly through [telediagnosis](#), which is available by contacting dpdx@cdc.gov.
- Promptly remove and kill **all** larvae and eggs from patients with suspected NWS. This usually requires physical removal. Dispose of larvae and eggs properly. **Do not dispose of any larvae (maggots) or eggs directly in the trash or outside on the ground. Failure to kill and properly dispose of all larvae or eggs could result in the new introduction and spread of NWS in the local environment.**
 - Place larvae and eggs in a leak-proof container containing a volume of liquid sufficient to fully submerge larvae and eggs.
 - 70% ethanol (preferred) will both kill and preserve the larvae and eggs for identification. Alternative liquids include 70% (or greater) isopropanol or, if no alcohol is available, 5%–10% formalin is acceptable.
 - Collect any remaining larvae and eggs in a separate leakproof container, submerge them in alcohol, place the container into a zip-top plastic bag, and seal it. Dispose of the sealed bag in the trash.
- The treatment of NWS in humans is removal of all eggs and larvae, which might require surgical extraction if the larvae are embedded deeply into tissues. There have not been any studies to prove that any specific medication is useful in treatment in humans. Patients with secondary infections or additional symptoms may need supportive care.
- Reexamine treated lesions after 24–48 hours to confirm no live larvae remain. Remove and safely dispose of any remaining larvae as described above.

Recommendations for Laboratories

- Ensure **all** larvae are placed in a leak-proof container containing a volume of liquid sufficient to fully submerge larvae. 70% ethanol (preferred) will both kill and preserve the larvae and eggs for identification. Alternatives include 70% (or greater) isopropanol or 5% – 10% formalin. **Do not dispose of any larvae (maggots) or eggs directly in the trash or outside on the ground.**
 - Place larvae and eggs in a leak-proof container containing a volume of liquid sufficient to fully submerge larvae and eggs.
 - 70% ethanol (preferred) will both kill and preserve the larvae and eggs for identification. Alternative liquids include 70% (or greater) isopropanol or, if no alcohol is available, 5%–10% formalin is acceptable.
 - Collect any remaining larvae and eggs in a separate leakproof container, submerge them in alcohol, place the container into a zip-top plastic bag, and seal it. Dispose of the sealed bag in the trash.
- Immediately report suspect human NWS cases to the Maine CDC by calling 1-800-821-5821.
- Immediately report suspected animal NWS cases to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry at 207-287-3701 or USDA Veterinary Services at 1-866-536-7593.
- For diagnostic questions about human NWS, contact U.S. CDC’s Diagnostic Parasitology Laboratory, DPDx, (dpdx@cdc.gov) or Parasitic Diseases Branch (404-718-4745 or parasites@cdc.gov) during business hours or U.S. CDC’s Emergency Operations Center (770-488-7100) after regular business hours. Non-clinical questions can be directed to newworldscrewworm@cdc.gov.

Recommendations for the Public

- **Prevention** is key to protecting yourself from NWS in areas where the NWS fly is present.

- Keep open wounds clean and covered, no matter how small or location on the body.
- Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants, socks, and hats to limit areas where you could get bitten by insects or scratched.
- Prevent insect bites, especially when visiting areas where NWS flies are present and spending time outdoors.
- Use an [EPA-registered insect repellent](#).
- Treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin.
- Sleep indoors; if the room has windows, the windows should be screened. If you are outside, sleep under a bed net or inside a screened tent.
- If you see or feel maggots (larvae) in or on a wound or other area of your body, seek medical care immediately.
- Do not try to remove any maggots or egg masses yourself. **Do not throw any larvae (maggots) or eggs directly in the trash or outside on the ground** as this could result in NWS spreading in your area. If maggots or eggs fall out of the wound, cover them with alcohol (70% ethanol) in a leak-proof container and bring them to your healthcare provider.
- Contact the Maine CDC by calling 1-800-821-5821 if you have questions about NWS.

Recommendations for Veterinarians

- Immediately report all suspected NWS cases in animals to the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry at 207-287-3701 or USDA Veterinary Services at 1-866-536-7593.
- Larvae and eggs from NWS cases in animals can be submitted to USDA’s National Veterinary Services Laboratory for identification. See [guidance from APHIS](#) on specimen submission.
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued an [Emergency Use Authorization for the use of Credelio \(lotilaner\) chewable tablets to treat NWS infestations in dogs and cats](#).
- For animals with larval infestations in a lesion:
 - Promptly remove and kill **all** larvae and eggs in suspected NWS cases. This might require physical removal. **Failure to kill and properly dispose of all larvae or eggs could result in the new introduction and spread of NWS in the local environment.**
 - Place larvae and eggs in a leak-proof container containing a volume of liquid sufficient to fully submerge larvae and eggs.
 - 70% ethanol (preferred) will both kill and preserve the larvae and eggs for identification. Alternative liquids include 70% (or greater) isopropanol or if no alcohol is available, 5%–10% formalin is acceptable.
 - Collect any remaining larvae and eggs in a separate leakproof container, submerge them in alcohol, place the container into a zip-top plastic bag, and seal it. Dispose of the sealed bag in the trash.
 - **Do not dispose of any larvae or eggs directly in the trash or outside on the ground.**
- See [guidance from APHIS](#) on disposal of larvae and eggs and cleaning and disinfecting affected premises.

For More Information

About New World screwworm

- [About New World Screwworm | U.S. CDC](#) / In Spanish: [Acerca de la miasis por el gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo | El gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo | U.S. CDC](#)
- [New World Screwworm Outbreak | U.S. CDC](#)
- [Clinical Overview of New World Screwworm | U.S. CDC](#) / In Spanish: [Información clínica sobre la miasis por el gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo | U.S. CDC](#)
- [Resurgence of New World Screwworm in the Americas: What Healthcare Providers Need to Know](#) | Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA) | U.S. CDC

- [Laboratory Identification of New World Screwworm](#) (bench aid) | U.S. CDC / In Spanish: [Identificación en laboratorio del gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo](#) (bench aid) | U.S. CDC
- [Telediagnosis of New World Screwworm](#) (bench aid) | U.S. CDC
- [gov | Stop Screwworm: Unified Government Response to Protect the United States](#) | USDA
- [New World Screwworm](#) | USDA
- [New World Screwworm: What You Need to Know \(brochure\)](#) | USDA / In Spanish: [Gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo: Lo que necesita saber](#) (folleto) | USDA
- [New World Screwworm \(story map\)](#) | USDA
- [Screwworm: An International Threat to Human and Animal Health \(poster\)](#) | USDA
- [New World Screwworm Draft Response Playbook](#) | APHIS | USDA

Where to report cases of New World screwworm

- Human cases: the Maine CDC by calling 1-800-821-5821
- Animal cases: the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry at 207-287-3701 or USDA Veterinary Services at 1-866-536-7593

Preventing insect bites

- [Preventing Mosquito Bites](#) | U.S. CDC
- [Preventing Mosquito Bites While Traveling](#) | U.S. CDC
- [About Permethrin-Treated Clothing and Gear](#) | U.S. CDC
- [How to Prevent Mosquito and Tick Bites](#) | U.S. CDC
- [Repellents: Protection against Mosquitoes, Ticks and Other Arthropods](#) | EPA