



New World Screwworm (NWS) Frequently Asked Questions

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What is New World Screwworm (NWS)?

New World Screwworm (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*/NWS) is a parasitic fly whose larvae feed on living tissue. After being eradicated from the U.S. in 1966, Mexico in 1991, and Central America in 2000, NWS reemerged in Central America in 2023 and spread north into Mexico in 2024. The flies have continued to be detected in increasingly northern locations since that time. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), [NWS has been detected](#) in the U.S. The USDA is working with affected states, Mexico, and Central American countries to respond with sterile fly releases, surveillance, and movement controls.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Any warm-blooded animal can be affected, including pets, livestock, wildlife, and people. The adult flies are usually attracted to mucous membranes and open wounds, even if small. Early detection prevents severe, sometimes fatal, infestations. What to look out for:

- Painful, enlarging, draining, foul smelling wounds.
- Larvae burrowed deep in tissue. Wounds can be infested with multiple maggot species.
- Sudden discomfort, agitation, or behavior changes in animals.

How do I keep my animals and myself safe?

NWS is a reportable disease. If you believe you've detected NWS in your pets or livestock, first contact your veterinarian. Anyone (veterinarians, producers, animal owners, etc.) who suspects a reportable animal disease is required to report it to a State or Federal Animal Health Official. To report an animal disease, please follow the instructions on the [DATCP Home Reporting Animal Diseases](#) webpage.

To report wildlife with suspicious wounds, please visit the [Department of Natural Resources \(DNR\) website](#), email DNRWildlifeSwitchboard@wisconsin.gov, or call (608) 267-0866.

Contact your healthcare provider immediately if you see or feel maggots in or on a wound or other area of your body.

Monitor your animals for signs of NWS maggots and report suspected incidences to your veterinarian. Although maggots and flies have unique characteristics, these can be difficult to identify without specialized equipment and expertise. Further testing may be needed to confirm



the maggot species. According to USDA, there is no need to watch for or report suspect adult flies.

Be aware of movement requirements from all states including affected states and infested zones within them. If you are importing animals, make sure to follow the movement requirements to lower the risk of moving NWS to Wisconsin. Animals imported into Wisconsin are required to have a certificate of veterinary inspection (CVI or health certificate) and may have additional requirements for permits, testing, treatments, statements, or identification depending on species and origin.

Check DATCP's [Animal Movement page](#) for requirements before importing animals to Wisconsin and ensure all animal movement requirements are met for animals moving from an affected area. Contact [other states](#) for their import requirements if exporting animals. Requirements may change over time based on disease risks. When the animals arrive in Wisconsin, inspect them carefully for signs of NWS and monitor for the next 10 days. Contact your veterinarian if you see any signs of NWS.

Is human health affected/should I be concerned for my health and safety?

NWS is a fly that lays its eggs in open wounds and body openings (mucous membranes) such as the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, or genitals.

Most infections occur in animals like livestock, pets, or wildlife, but rarely do they occur in people. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the current risk of NWS for people in the U.S. is very low. You are at higher risk for NWS if you live or travel to areas where NWS flies are found, spend a lot of time outside where the flies are, and if you have an open wound.

If you are traveling to an area where there are cases of NWS, it is important to take steps to prevent insect bites and keep any wounds clean and covered. If you see or feel maggots in or on a wound or other area of your body, contact your health care provider immediately. Tell them if you have recently traveled to Central or South America, the Caribbean, Mexico, or the affected U.S. states.

How are NWS flies and maggots monitored in the wild?

If you see live wild animals with larvae (maggots) infesting a wound, contact DNR Wildlife Health by filling out the survey form [Sick or Dead Wildlife Reporting Form](#), emailing DNRWildlifeSwitchboard@wisconsin.gov or leaving a voice message at (608) 267-0866.

USDA-APHIS is monitoring and reporting NWS domestic cases, wildlife and feral cases, and fly trap detections on their [New World Screwworm Confirmed Detections Dashboard](#).



Is this a food safety issue?

No, NWS is not a food safety issue. NWS larvae feed on living tissue in animals, but they do not contaminate meat or other foods during processing. Additionally, [according to the USDA](#) Federal Meat Inspection Act, animals used for human food production must pass inspection before slaughter and after slaughter to ensure food safety and humane handling requirements are met.

What happens if this is found in Wisconsin?

NWS can cause serious, and sometimes fatal, infestations; however, it is treatable. Early detection is important for a good outcome for individual animals and to control further spread.

Suspect maggots will be tested to confirm the presence of NWS. If NWS maggots are confirmed to be present, DATCP will follow USDA protocols. In general, infested animals and infested premises are quarantined.

- Infested animals will be required to be treated and will not be able to leave the premises until they are free from NWS.
- Infested premises will have requirements for treating infested animals and treating contaminated areas, including with insecticide where applicable. Information will be gathered to determine the risks of further spread of the larvae or flies from the premises. Uninfected animals will be able to leave the premises under increased requirements for inspection, treatment, and documentation.
- In rare instances, severe infestation may result in euthanasia for humane reasons.

An infested zone may be established around the affected premises. Animal movements from premises within an infested zone may also have increased requirements for inspection, treatment, and documentation.

Federal and state partners will additionally increase surveillance in wildlife and for flies. Sterile flies may be released to help to contain the outbreak. NWS generally prefers hot and humid environments and may not be able to establish populations in Wisconsin.

How should I report a suspected case?

NWS is a reportable disease. If you believe you've detected NWS in your pets or livestock, first contact your veterinarian. Anyone (veterinarians, producers, animal owners, etc.) who suspects a reportable animal disease is required to report it to a Federal or State Animal Health Official. To report an animal disease, please follow the instructions on the [DATCP Home Reporting Animal Diseases](#) webpage.



Should I report finding adult flies (not larvae)?

According to USDA, members of the public should inspect for larvae associated with an animal, instead of adult flies. Many types of flies look alike, and even a true NWS fly could look like a common housefly or blowfly, or one of the harmless [sterile flies](#) USDA releases as part of their eradication efforts (in areas where sterile flies have been released). Instead:

- Regularly check your animals for any signs of NWS infestation, especially wounds with larvae in them, irritated or unusual behavior, the smell of decay, or anything that doesn't look right.
- If you see any of these signs in pets, livestock, or wild animals, report it immediately to your veterinarian or [DATCP Home Reporting Animal Diseases](#).

What does the temporary movement order for NWS mean?

To protect Wisconsin's animals and animal industries from NWS, DATCP issued a [temporary movement order](#) restricting the import of domestic warm-blooded animals from states with active NWS-infested zones. Wisconsin receives animals from southern states where NWS risk is highest, and any warm-blooded animal with an open wound can be affected, including pets, livestock, horses, wildlife, and people.

Under this order, animals imported into Wisconsin from states with active NWS-infested zones must meet additional requirements. Animals not originating from an infested zone must have a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) stating they did not originate from an NWS-infested area. Animals originating from an infested zone may not enter Wisconsin unless the importer receives a DATCP-approved permit at least 48 hours prior to movement, and the CVI includes statements confirming the animals' origin, a visual inspection within five days of movement showing no evidence of NWS, and details of any treatment administered.

How can I learn more/stay updated?

Visit the [DATCP Home New World Screwworm \(NWS\)](#) webpage for updates, and be sure to sign up for DATCP's NWS updates directly to your inbox:

<https://service.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIDATCP/subscriber/new>

Resources

- [DATCP Home New World Screwworm \(NWS\)](#)
- [Screwworm.gov | Unified Government Response to Protect the United States](#)
- [New World Screwworm Outbreak | New World Screwworm | CDC](#)