



To: CAHAN San Diego Participants

Date: September 8, 2025

From: Public Health Services

Health Advisory: New World Screwworm Outbreak in Mexico and Central America

Key Messages

- New World screwworm (NWS) is a parasitic fly whose larvae feed on living tissue and can infest mammals and birds; it largely affects livestock but can also affect pets, wildlife, and humans.
- On August 4, 2025, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Maryland Department of Health confirmed that a U.S. resident with recent travel to El Salvador as the first travel-associated case of NWS in 2025.
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH) subsequently issued a Health Advisory about the ongoing outbreak of NWS in southern Mexico and Central America that is spreading northward.
- Healthcare providers who identify myiasis (maggots) in a patient should ask about travel within 10 days of symptom onset to a country where NWS is present and notify the County Epidemiology Unit immediately.

Situation

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recently identified](#) a travel-associated human case of New World screwworm (NWS) in the United States. On September 4th, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released a [Health Advisory](#) on NWS for healthcare providers, local health departments, laboratories, and travelers.

Background

New World screwworm (NWS) is a parasitic fly whose larvae feed on living tissue, particularly livestock but can also affect pets, wildlife, and humans. NWS has not been found in livestock, pets, wildlife or in the environment in the United States (U.S.). In addition, no locally acquired cases of NWS infestation in humans have been reported to date. However, NWS was endemic in the southern half of the US until it was officially eradicated from the United States in 1966.

New World screwworm can cause infestations in wounds and any mucus membrane or open body orifice including the ears, eyes, nose, mouth, vagina, and rectum. Larvae feed on healthy tissue causing pain, sensation of movement, and malodorous bloody discharge from the infested sites. Extensive tissue invasion and destruction may be seen. Larvae may be seen around or in open sores. NWS is not directly contagious between animals or humans, as animals and humans are infested by adult flies in the environment. However, larvae that are not properly disposed of in alcohol can develop into adults that could lead to local transmission. For more information, CDC has recorded a Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity on the [Resurgence of New World Screwworm in the Americas: What Healthcare Providers Need to Know](#).

Actions Requested

1. **Ask** about recent travel to a country where NWS is present in a patient with myiasis (maggots).
2. **Collect** all suspected NWS larvae and place them in a leak-proof container with 70% ethanol, or other alcohol (5 to 10% formalin is an acceptable alternative if alcohol is not available). Alcohol will kill the larvae and preserve them for identification.
3. **Submit** specimens to the County of San Diego Public Health Laboratory. When completing the [test requisition form](#), select 'Send-Out' under the 'Parasitology' section, and specify 'New World screwworm'.
4. **Never discard** live larvae in the trash, as larvae that are not appropriately disposed of can develop into adult flies, establish a local fly population, and promote further spread within the U.S.
5. **Review** CDPH [Health Advisory on NWS](#) for additional recommendations.
6. **Report** all cases of suspected myiasis (maggots) San Diego County Epidemiology Unit by calling 619-692-8499 (8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday); 858-565-5255 (after hours and holidays).

Resources

Federal

[HHS and USDA Confirm Singular Traveler-Associated New World Screwworm Case; Precautionary and Proactive Surveillance Ongoing | HHS.gov](#)
[CDC Clinical Overview of New World Screwworm | New World Screwworm](#)
[CDC New World Screwworm Myiasis, Recommendations for Healthcare Providers](#)
[CDC New World Screwworm Myiasis, What You Need to Know](#)
[CDC Resurgence of New World Screwworm in the Americas: What Healthcare Providers Need to Know | COCA](#)

State

[CDPH New World Screwworm Outbreak in Mexico and Central America](#)

Thank you for your participation.

CAHAN San Diego

County of San Diego Health & Human Services Agency
Epidemiology and Immunization Services Branch
Phone: (619) 692-8499; Fax: (858) 715-6458
Urgent Phone for pm/weekends/holidays: (858) 565-5255
E-mail: cahan@sdcounty.ca.gov
Secure Website: <http://cahan.ca.gov>
Public Website: <http://www.cahansandiego.com>