

New World Screwworm: Staying Vigilant While Protecting U.S. Livestock

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The recent detection of **New World Screwworm (NWS)** in the United States marks the first domestic cases in decades and serves as an important reminder that animal health requires continued vigilance and international cooperation. Although the situation deserves attention, it is equally important to recognize that Federal, State, and international animal health authorities have extensive experience responding to this pest, and significant resources are already being deployed to contain and eradicate it. USDA, in coordination with State animal health officials, has implemented surveillance, movement controls, quarantines, and sterile fly releases to limit the spread of the pest while protecting the U.S. livestock industry.

Because the situation continues to evolve, USLGE members are encouraged to monitor the **USDA APHIS Current Status of New World Screwworm** webpage for the latest confirmed detections, response activities, and official updates.



Source: Penn State Extension

Web link:
**USDA APHIS –
Current Status
of New World
Screwworm**

What Does This Mean for the Livestock Industry?

The most immediate impact is on **live animal movement and international trade**. To start, both the United States and Mexico suspended the importation of live cattle, horses, and other susceptible livestock from one another as a temporary animal health measure to help prevent the spread of NWS across the shared border. Those restrictions were intended to mitigate the propagation of the pest while surveillance, containment, and eradication efforts continue in affected areas. Encouragingly, USDA announced on July 25, 2026, a phased reopening of the U.S.-Mexico border for live cattle imports, beginning with cattle originating from Sonora through the Douglas, Arizona, port of entry.

Although temporary restrictions may affect breeding stock, feeder cattle, and other live animal movements, they are precautionary measures designed to protect the long-term health of the North American livestock industry. This milestone reflects the effectiveness of ongoing surveillance, control measures, and close collaboration between U.S. and Mexican animal health

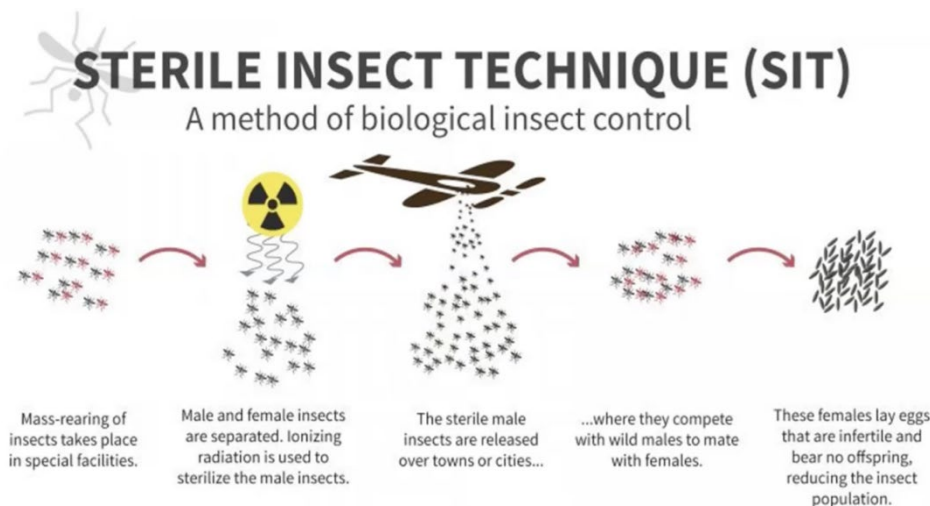
authorities, while maintaining stringent safeguards to prevent the spread of NWS. This is particularly important for sectors that depend on the movement of high-value livestock genetics. As surveillance data improve and the situation remains contained, animal health authorities will continue evaluating conditions for the safe resumption of trade.

Wildlife can also play a role in the epidemiology of NWS. Wild mammals that sustain wounds may become infested and contribute to the natural movement of the pest across large geographic areas, reinforcing the need for a coordinated regional response throughout North America.

Importantly, NWS does not affect the safety of meat or dairy products. The parasite feeds on living tissue in live animals and is not a food safety concern. Consumers can continue to purchase and consume beef, dairy products, and other animal products with confidence.

Regional Response and International Cooperation

North America's response to NWS is built on one of the world's most successful animal health programs—the **Sterile Insect Technique**. This scientifically proven method was instrumental in eliminating NWS from the United States in the past and remains the cornerstone of today's eradication strategy.



Source: University of Georgia–Extension

Encouragingly, regional capacity continues to expand:

- **Mexico recently inaugurated a new sterile fly production facility in Chiapas**, significantly increasing the number of sterile flies available for release throughout affected regions.
- The **COPEG sterile fly production facility in Panama** continues to produce and release millions of sterile flies each week, serving as the primary biological barrier protecting North America from south-to-north expansion.

- The **USDA sterile fly production facility in McCook, Texas**, continues to support domestic response efforts and complements regional sterile fly production and dispersal activities.

Together, these facilities represent a coordinated North American strategy designed to suppress and ultimately eliminate NWS before it can become reestablished in the United States.

Producer Awareness Is the Best Defense

While government agencies continue surveillance and eradication efforts, livestock producers remain the first line of defense. Producers are encouraged to increase surveillance during management practices that create fresh wounds, including:

- Calving and newborn umbilical care
- Dehorning
- Castration
- Branding
- Ear tagging
- Shearing
- Treatment of injuries and accidental wounds

Fresh wounds should be inspected regularly, particularly during periods of increased fly activity. Animals exhibiting wounds that fail to heal, contain foul-smelling discharge, or show evidence of maggots should be examined immediately by a veterinarian.

Early detection remains the most effective tool for limiting the spread of NWS. Prompt reporting of suspected cases to a veterinarian or State animal health official enables rapid response teams to investigate, contain, and eradicate infestations before they expand.

Looking Ahead

The United States successfully eradicated NWS once before through strong producer participation, scientific innovation, and international cooperation. Those same principles continue to guide today's response.

While temporary disruptions to live animal trade are expected as animal health authorities implement appropriate safeguards, the outlook remains positive. Expanded sterile fly production, enhanced surveillance, responsible livestock management, and close collaboration among the United States, Mexico, and Panama provide confidence that the current outbreak can be contained.

For members of U.S. Livestock Genetics Export, continued vigilance, sound biosecurity practices, and close communication with customers and industry partners will help protect livestock health while preserving confidence in U.S. genetics and international trade. By remaining informed and proactive, producers and exporters alike play an essential role in safeguarding the future of the North American livestock industry.