



Non-profit 88-3037011

INFORMATION SHARING MEMO

SCREWORM

SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

Screwworm: What Fosterers and Adopters Need to Know¹

What is screwworm?

Screwworm is a type of fly larva, or maggot, that can infest wounds on animals. Unlike regular maggots that usually feed on dead tissue, **screwworm larvae feed on living tissue**. That is what makes them dangerous.

Screwworm can affect dogs, cats, livestock, wildlife, birds, and, rarely, people. It is considered a serious animal-health concern because it can spread quickly and cause painful, fast-worsening wounds if not treated right away.

Why are we concerned with screwworm now?

We're concerned now because New World screwworm has reappeared in the U.S. after being eliminated here for decades, and there are now confirmed 2026 cases in domestic animals, including dogs.

USDA confirmed the first recent U.S. detection in a Texas calf on June 3, 2026, and stated that New World screwworm can affect livestock, pets, wildlife, birds, and rarely people. USDA then confirmed additional cases, including a dog, and current reporting says the U.S. total has reached 15 confirmed cases as of late June 2026.

So the reason we're talking about it now is not panic. It is because there is a current outbreak response, confirmed animal cases, and dogs with wounds or skin problems are exactly the kind of animals we want fosterers and adopters to check early.

How Dogs Can Get Screwworm

A screwworm fly is attracted to open skin, wounds, sores, or moist body openings. The fly may lay eggs in or near:

- cuts, scrapes, punctures, or surgical incisions
- bite wounds
- hot spots or skin infections

¹ This is based on current USDA/CDC reporting. Local risk varies by state and animal travel history.



Non-profit 88-3037011

INFORMATION SHARING MEMO

SCREWORM

SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

- ears
- nose
- mouth
- eyes
- genitals
- rectal area
- irritated skin folds
- mange, alopecia
- newborn umbilical areas

When the eggs hatch, the larvae move into the tissue and begin feeding. The wound can worsen quickly.

Why This Matters

Screwworm is not something to “watch for a few days.” A wound that has screwworm can become deeper, larger, infected, and extremely painful quickly. Untreated cases can become life-threatening.

The good news is that animals can recover well when the problem is found early and treated by a veterinarian.

What to Look For

Please check your foster or adopted dog daily, especially if the dog has any wound, incision, skin infection, ear problem, rectal irritation, or moist skin fold.

Warning signs may include:

- a wound that is getting bigger instead of healing
- a wound that looks deeper than expected
- bloody, watery, or pus-like drainage
- a bad or “rotting” smell from the wound
- visible maggots or small white larvae in the wound
- tiny white egg clusters around a wound or body opening
- the dog suddenly licking, chewing, rubbing, or biting at one area
- head shaking, especially if the ears are involved
- pain when touched
- swelling, redness, or heat around the area
- depression, hiding, weakness, or not wanting to eat
- fever or acting “off”



Non-profit 88-3037011

INFORMATION SHARING MEMO

SCREWORM

SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

A common clue is this:

The wound looks worse than it should, smells bad, and the dog seems very uncomfortable.

Where to Check on the Dog

Please check:

- ears and ear openings
- eyes and nose
- mouth/lip folds
- neck folds
- armpits
- belly
- tail pocket
- vulva or penis area
- rectal area
- paws and between toes
- any surgical incision
- any scrape, sore, hot spot, bite, or skin fold

French Bulldogs and other short-nosed dogs can have deep folds and hidden irritated areas, so look carefully.

What Screwworm May Look Like

You may see what looks like maggots in a wound. They may be moving. The wound may also have a strong odor and drainage.

Do not assume this is “just a dirty wound,” “just a hot spot,” or “regular maggots.” Screwworm needs veterinary attention immediately.

What To Do If You Suspect Screwworm

Please do **not** try to dig larvae out yourself.

Do not pour harsh chemicals, peroxide, alcohol, bleach, essential oils, or home remedies into the wound. This can cause more pain and tissue damage.



Non-profit 88-3037011

INFORMATION SHARING MEMO

SCREWORM

SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

Instead:

1. Keep the dog safely contained indoors.
2. Prevent licking or chewing if you can safely do so.
3. Take clear photos or video if possible.
4. Contact the rescue/veterinarian immediately.
5. Treat this as urgent.

If you see maggots in a wound or body opening, the dog needs veterinary care right away.

How Screwworm Is Treated

Treatment must be done by a veterinarian. The vet may need to:

- remove larvae safely
- clean and disinfect the wound
- treat pain
- treat infection
- use appropriate parasite control medication
- report the case if required by animal-health officials

Screwworm is important from a public-health and animal-health standpoint, so suspected cases may need to be reported.

How to Help Prevent It

You can reduce risk by:

- checking dogs daily for wounds or irritated skin
- keeping wounds clean and covered as directed by a vet
- keeping dogs indoors when possible if there is local concern
- preventing flies from getting to open wounds
- using vet-recommended flea/tick/parasite prevention
- reporting any wound that is not healing normally to rescue
- keeping surgical incisions protected
- not ignoring ear infections, tail pocket infections, skin fold irritations, hot spots, or rectal irritation

When to Contact Us or a Veterinarian Immediately

Please contact the rescue, if you have a foster dog, or veterinarian, if you have an adopted dog, immediately if your dog has:

- any maggots in a wound
- a wound with a foul odor



Non-profit 88-3037011

INFORMATION SHARING MEMO

SCREWORM

SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

- a wound that is rapidly growing or deepening
- drainage from a wound or body opening
- sudden severe licking, biting, or pain
- head shaking with a smelly ear
- rectal, genital, nose, eye, or mouth irritation with discharge
- weakness, fever, not eating, or acting very sick

Bottom Line

Screwworm is rare in many areas, but it is serious. The key is early detection.

If a wound smells bad, is getting worse quickly, has drainage, or you see anything moving inside it, **do not wait**. Contact the rescue or veterinarian immediately.

Early treatment can save the dog's life.

Respectfully,
SoCal French Bulldog Rescue

Disclaimer: SoCal French Bulldog Rescue is not a substitute for a veterinarian's review and educated opinion on any health subject presented in our Information Sharing Program. We are only relaying key information to help you and your French Bulldog you either foster or adopted from our rescue. Thank you.