



**WESTERN ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCERS**  
**A L L I A N C E**

# Responding to New World Screwworm: What Dairy Farmers Need and Why It Matters

As New World Screwworm reemerges, dairy farmers need clear guidance, coordinated action, and timely support to protect animals and livelihoods.

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Over the past week, New World Screwworm has been confirmed in multiple cases in the United States, including cattle in Texas and a dog case later reclassified to New Mexico. Investigations are ongoing, and USDA has said it will share additional information as it becomes available. New World Screwworm is a serious pest that threatens livestock, pets, wildlife, and, in rare cases, people. Its larvae burrow into living tissue, causing severe wounds, animal suffering, and major economic losses. As of June 8, USDA had confirmed five U.S. cases and was continuing to test suspected cases. Dudley Hoskins, Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, urged animal owners to stay alert, check animals carefully, and report anything suspicious. USDA and the Texas Animal Health Commission are using the following measures to contain the spread:

- Establishing and maintaining a 20km infested zone with quarantines, movement controls, and heightened surveillance around confirmed detections
- Increasing trapping along the border and outside the dispersal zone
- Conducting surveillance and management strategies in wildlife
- Implementing targeted outreach to local producers, veterinarians, and communities

USDA is also continuing sterile fly releases over and just beyond the infested areas. USDA has activated the sterile fly dispersal facility at Moore Air Base in Edinburg, Texas, to support faster aerial release operations in affected areas of Texas and northern Mexico near the border. USDA is urging animal owners in the area to watch for the following signs:

1. Draining or enlarging wounds
2. Maggots or egg masses
3. Signs of discomfort
4. Lesions in body openings (nose, ears, genitalia, umbilical area)

According to USDA officials, the U.S. food supply remains safe. New World Screwworm does not affect meat, fruits, vegetables, or other food products. If an animal were infected, USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service inspections would identify it, and no contaminated product would enter the market.

**What is New World Screwworm?** New World Screwworm (NWS, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*) is a highly destructive pest. The name comes from the larvae's feeding behavior: they burrow into wounds in a twisting motion, much like a screw entering wood. The maggots damage living tissue with sharp mouth hooks, and wounds can enlarge and deepen as more larvae hatch and feed. Adult screwworm flies are about the size of, or slightly larger than, houseflies and are identified by orange eyes, metallic blue or green bodies, and three dark stripes on their backs.

**How does NWS infect animals?** NWS larvae, also known as maggots, invade the tissue of living animals and can cause severe, sometimes fatal, injuries. The pest can infest warm-blooded hosts, including livestock, pets, wildlife, people, and birds.

**How serious is NWS?** NWS infestations can be devastating and often become life-threatening for affected animals if not treated quickly.

**Why are sterile fly releases so important?** Female NWS flies mate only once. If a female mates with a sterile male, she cannot produce offspring. Sterile flies can be released by air or ground, although aerial release is preferred when large areas must be covered.

In June 2025, USDA announced a five-pronged plan to address New World Screwworm.

1. Innovate our way to eradication
2. Protect the U.S. border by constructing a domestic sterile screwworm production facility
3. Prevent wildlife-assisted migration
4. Stop the pest from spreading in Mexico and ensure full partnership in eradication efforts
5. Keep U.S. food safety a top priority

## Organic treatment considerations for certified producers

APHIS provides guidance on detection and reporting, but organic-specific treatment recommendations remain very limited. Producers can review Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) listings to confirm whether a product is allowed and should also consult their veterinarian.

Routine insecticide use is generally not very effective against New World Screwworm because larvae can infest wounds in wildlife hosts. For that reason, control relies mainly on early detection, surveillance, and the release of sterile male flies rather than routine spraying.

Organic livestock producers may recognize **moxidectin** as a treatment allowed under USDA National Organic Program (NOP) rules for severe parasitism when preventive organic management is not enough.

Questions have recently come up about whether moxidectin could help manage New World Screwworm (NWS). Current FDA-authorized treatment and prevention options for NWS in cattle focus on doramectin products, including Dectomax. Some studies on Old World Screwworm (OWS) found that **injectable moxidectin** can provide strong protection against myiasis and reinfestation in cattle. However, those studies involved OWS, not NWS, so evidence for New World Screwworm remains limited. Injectable moxidectin would likely be more effective than a pour-on treatment, which may not circulate or act quickly enough to treat an active infestation. It is important to note that if a farm chooses to use Moxidectin it will be extra-label use and needs to be done through the farm's veterinarian.

For organic operations, moxidectin would likely be used only as a treatment when no other option is available and with an explanation to the certifier. It may also be considered at the time of wounding as a preventive measure when the risk of NWS is especially high. Even so, whole-herd injections are unlikely to be cost-effective or efficient, since the benefit may last only days to a couple of weeks.

PyGanic Specialty remains the only OMRI-listed livestock product referenced here for killing adult flies. It is labeled for animal contact and has long been used for adult fly control. It is not yet clear whether it is effective against larvae. A separate wound-treatment option is still needed, and moxidectin has been discussed as one possible area for further study.

## Steps farmers can take to help prevent infestation

- Watch livestock for signs of NWS. Detection, surveillance, & treatment are essential.
- Handle livestock carefully and inspect pens and equipment for sharp objects that can cause wounds, including barbed wire.
- Treat the umbilical cords of newborn animals and all wounds promptly with an approved product where appropriate. Consult your herd veterinarian and organic certifier about the best options for your operation.
- Protect livestock from other wound-causing parasites, such as ticks. Female NWS flies can lay eggs in even very small wounds, including tick-bite sites.
- Do not bring in animals from Mexico or Central America.
- Continued attention to regular fly and tick control and prevention as crucial.

If you believe you have found screwworm, report it immediately to your [state animal health official](#) and your [APHIS office](#). Prompt reporting allows APHIS and its partners to respond quickly and eliminate screwworms before a population becomes established. More information about New World Screwworm is available at [Screwworm.gov](#).

## References

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