



# THE THREAT OF NEW WORLD SCREWORM

and the Urgent Need for Action

## History of Eradication

The United States successfully eradicated the New World screwworm in 1966 using an innovative sterile insect technique developed by USDA scientists. This groundbreaking method involved releasing sterile male flies to break the reproductive cycle, leading to the fly's elimination across the southern U.S. and much of Central America. The program is one of the most successful examples of area-wide pest eradication in history.

## Understanding the Screwworm Lifecycle

Despite its name, the screwworm is not a worm but the larval stage of the *Cochliomyia hominivorax* fly. Female flies lay eggs in open wounds or mucous membranes of warm-blooded animals. Once hatched, the larvae feed on living tissue in a screw-like motion, causing severe pain, secondary infections, and potentially death if untreated. This aggressive lifecycle makes early detection and treatment critical.

## Economic Impact to Texas

The reintroduction of screwworms would be catastrophic for the United States' livestock and wildlife industries. In Texas alone USDA estimates a \$1.8 billion annual economic impact with Texas cattle producers alone facing losses of \$732 million per year. Additionally, the screwworm threatens Texas' \$9.6 billion hunting and wildlife industry by endangering native species such as white-tailed deer, exotic game, and other wildlife integral to the rural economy.

## Asks

Congress must act swiftly to protect American agriculture and wildlife by passing the STOP Screwworms Act and the New World Screwworm Preparedness Act of 2025. We also urge FDA and EPA to fast-track approval of drugs USDA identifies as effective for screwworm prevention and treatment. These emergency tools are critical to contain and respond to outbreaks while the U.S. works to establish a domestic sterile fly production facility.

## TIMELINE

- ▶ **NOV. 22, 2024**  
Mexico's Chief Veterinary Officer notified the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of a confirmed case of New World screwworm in a cow in Chiapas, near the Guatemalan border.
- ▶ **NOV. 25, 2024**  
In response, APHIS temporarily suspended the importation of live cattle, horses, and bison from Mexico to prevent the spread of the pest into the United States.
- ▶ **JAN. 21, 2025**  
APHIS resumed equine imports from Mexico under a new protocol requiring inspections and treatments to mitigate the risk of screwworm introduction.
- ▶ **FEB. 1, 2025**  
Following the development of comprehensive pre-clearance inspection and treatment protocols, APHIS announced the resumption of cattle and bison imports from Mexico. These protocols included inspections at designated facilities in San Jeronimo, Chihuahua, and Agua Prieta, Sonora.
- ▶ **APRIL 30, 2025**  
The U.S. and Mexico reached an agreement to enhance eradication efforts, with Mexico committing to eliminate restrictions on USDA aircraft and waive customs duties on eradication equipment. This cooperation aimed to prevent further spread of the screwworm.
- ▶ **MAY 12, 2025**  
Due to the rapid northward spread of the screwworm, with detections in Oaxaca and Veracruz, the U.S. suspended live cattle, horse, and bison imports from Mexico once again. The USDA emphasized the importance of food and animal safety, stating that the suspension would be reviewed monthly based on Mexico's containment progress.

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