



UC Cooperative Extension
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Central Valley Milk Notes Issue 2 - 2026 Fresno, Madera & Kings

New World Screwworm: What California Dairies Need to Know

Daniela Bruno, UCCE Fresno, Madera & Kings Counties

Screwworm is a serious pest that affects any warm-blooded animal, including cattle, sheep, goats, wildlife, and even humans. The larvae invade living tissue and cause deep, painful wounds that can quickly worsen and become life-threatening if untreated.

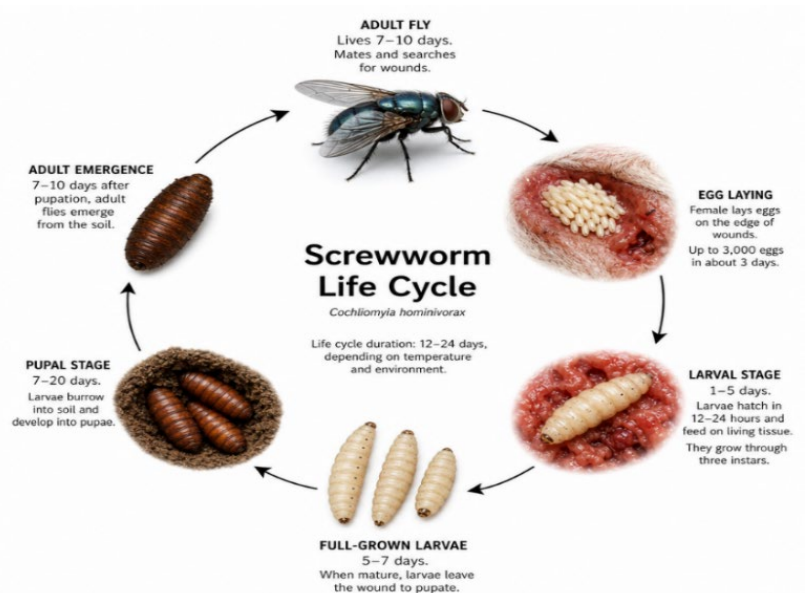
Although similar to a common fly, the adult screwworm is slightly larger and actively seeks open wounds to lay its eggs. The fly has a bright green or metallic blue body, reddish-orange eyes, and three dark stripes on its back. The larva is whitish, cylindrical, ringed, and covered with small spines, using a pair of hooks to dig into and feed on living tissue.



Risk Factors That Increase NWS Threat

The full life cycle of *Cochliomyia hominivorax* lasts **12–14 days**, allowing infestations to progress rapidly.

- Warm weather and high fly activity — more flies searching for fresh wounds.
- Procedures that create new wounds (dehorning, cuts, scratches, foot injuries, or any wound that attracts flies).
- Delayed or inconsistent wound care — wounds remain attractive longer.
- Pinkeye outbreaks — highly attractive to screwworm flies.
- Umbilical care — umbilical cords are prime targets.
- Shows, sales, and commingling events — increased exposure and wound risk.
- Animal movement from affected states — the most common route of long-distance spread.



Producers should watch for wounds that don't heal, a foul odor, visible larvae, or rapid tissue damage. Affected animals may show restlessness, kick at the wound, drop in milk or feed intake, or separate from the herd. If you see something suspicious, report it immediately; fast action is critical.

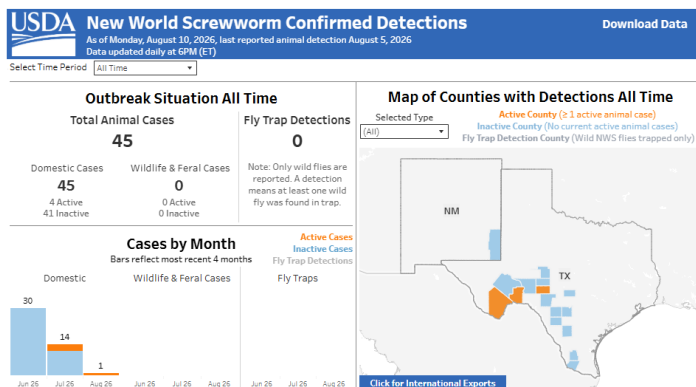
A Look Back — and Why It Matters Now

NWS was once a major livestock problem across the southern U.S. until a national sterile-fly program eradicated it in 1966. For decades, strong surveillance along the U.S.–Mexico border kept the pest out. However, NWS has repeatedly shown it can return through animal movement and trade:

- 2016: Reintroduced into Florida through imported animals; first cases found in Key deer.
- 2026: On June 3rd, the USDA confirmed the first new U.S. case in Texas.
- As of August 2026, 44 additional cases have been confirmed in Texas and New Mexico, all in domestic animals (cattle, goats, sheep, dogs).

California has no detected NWS cases

[USDA APHIS](#) provides real-time updates on confirmed cases and fly detection.



Active vs. Inactive Cases (APHIS Definitions)

- Active cases (orange): Animals still undergoing treatment and wound management for NWS.
- Inactive cases (blue): Animals that have fully recovered or carcasses that have been properly managed to prevent spread.

New California Entry Requirements (Effective June 11, 2026)

Animals entering California from NWS-affected regions, including livestock, poultry, equids, camelids, cervids, and companion animals, must meet enhanced entry requirements.

Animals suspected or known to be infested may NOT enter California without explicit authorization from CDFA. These measures aim to prevent accidental introduction through infested animals. More information: [CDFA - AHFSS - New World Screwworm](#)

Looking Ahead

Strengthen fly-control programs and make sure employees can recognize early signs of NWS. Maintain strict wound-care protocols. Before purchasing or transporting animals, review California's entry requirements and inspect fresh cows, calves, and any animals returning from shows or sales. Report suspicious wounds promptly to your veterinarian or CDFA. Continued producer awareness and rapid reporting are key to keeping California screwworm-free.

Daniela Bruno, DVM, PhD
UCCE Dairy Advisor – Fresno, Madera & Kings Counties
dfbruno@ucanr.edu
559-241-7552

The University of California prohibits discrimination or harassment of any person in any of its programs or activities. (Complete nondiscrimination policy statement can be found at <http://ucanr.org/sites/anrstaff/files/107734.doc>)

Inquiries regarding the University's equal employment opportunity policies may be directed to Affirmative Action Contact and Title IX Officer, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 2801 2nd Street, Davis, CA 95618, (530) 750-1397; titleixdiscrimination@ucanr.edu.