



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

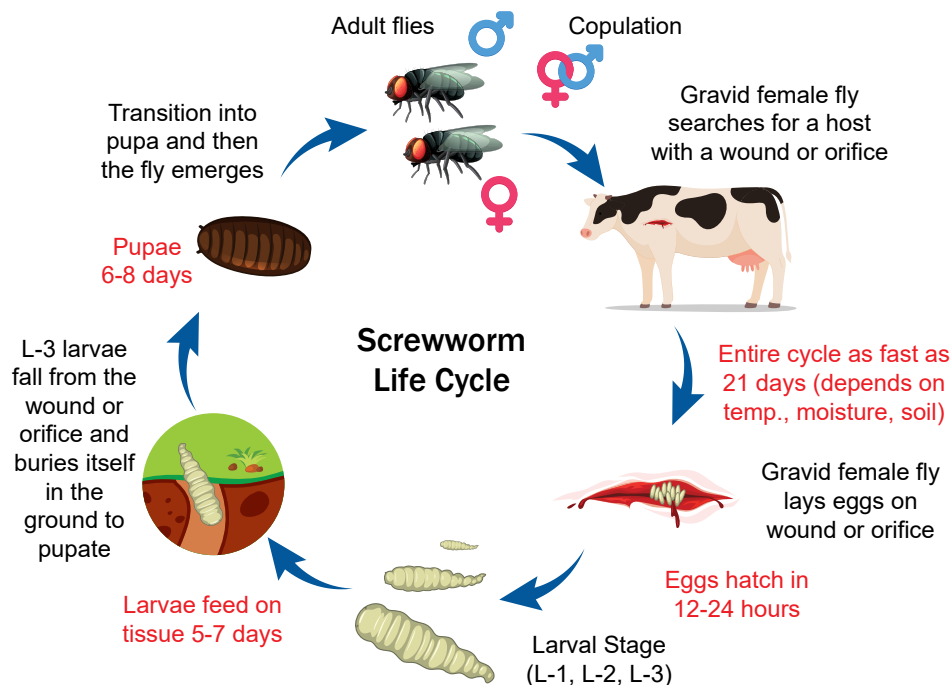
# New World Screwworm

Screwworms are fly larvae (maggots) that feed on living flesh. These parasites can infect any warm-blooded animal, including humans. If untreated, screwworm infestations can be fatal.



## Geographic Distribution

New World screwworm, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, has been moving North again after years of being pushed down past the Darien gap in Panama. Most recently the closest detection to the United States was in Oaxaca, Mexico. It is found in many areas of South America and some Caribbean Islands.



## Transmission

An adult screwworm fly is capable of flying for up to 10-14 days. They typically only fly short distances, 6-9 miles (10-15 km) when there are sufficient hosts in the area and suitable environmental conditions. There have been reports they can travel up to 125 miles although long distance spread is more likely to occur due to movement of infested animals.



## Clinical Signs

Infested animals may present with enlarging, draining, foul-smelling wounds and weight loss; they may isolate themselves and show signs of discomfort. Animals may die from secondary infection or toxicity in 7-14 days if not treated.

Wounds that might become infested include those caused by:

- Tick bites,
- Castration or dehorning,
- Branding,
- Shearing, and
- Sore mouth in sheep.



In addition, screwworms can infest the navels of newborn mammals, and mucous membranes of bodily orifices, including: nostrils and sinuses, eyes, mouth, ears, vulva, anus, prepuce, and urethral fossa.

**Screwworm is a foreign animal disease and must be reported to CDFA or USDA animal health officials within 24 hours of diagnosis.**

**Samples of eggs, larvae, or flies should be placed in 70% alcohol for transportation to the diagnostic laboratory.**

## Control

Animal health officials will quarantine the animal until daily wound care and treatments with larvicides and insecticides have successfully eliminated the screwworm larvae. The USDA and CDFA investigate cases, and determine if additional control measures, such as insecticidal treatment of the environment or sterile fly release, are warranted.



For more information about the Animal Health Branch, please visit:  
[www.cdfa.ca.gov/ah](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ah)

[CFSPH - Screwworm Myiasis](#)

[USDA APHIS - New World Screwworm Factsheet](#)

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