



Oklahoma Health Alert Network (OK-HAN)

OK-HAN Category: Health Update

New World Screwworm Update: Outbreak Moves into Northern Mexico

Adapted from: CDCHAN-00526 and OK-HAN_425

SUMMARY:

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) is issuing this updated Health Alert Network (HAN) Health Advisory to share information with clinicians and laboratories about recent New World Screwworm (NWS) animal cases in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas. As of March 3, 2026, Central American countries and Mexico have reported more than 157,000 NWS cases in animals and more than 1,380 cases in people [New World Screwworm Outbreak | CDC](#). **Currently, the NWS fly is not present in the United States or Oklahoma, and there are no current cases of NWS in the United States.**

KEY MESSAGES:

- Given the geographic proximity and potential for spread into the United States, it is critical for health care providers to recognize NWS in humans.
- Health care providers who identify myiasis in a patient with recent travel to a country where NWS is present should notify the OSDH Epidemiologist-on-call immediately at 405.426.8710.
- If NWS is suspected or confirmed, **do not discard larvae in the trash**. Remove and preserve all larvae and eggs by placing them directly into concentrated (70%) ethyl or 70% (or greater) isopropanol.
- The risk to human health in the U.S. remains very low.

BACKGROUND

New World Screwworm (NWS) is a parasitic fly (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) whose larvae feed on living tissue. NWS largely affects livestock but can also infest birds, pets, and humans. NWS myiasis occurs when NWS flies lay eggs in wounds or in other body cavities with mucus membranes, such as the nose, ears, eyes, or mouth. The eggs develop into parasitic larvae (maggots) that feed on healthy tissue, leading to pain, bloody discharge, and a foul-smelling odor from the site of infestation, with the potential for extensive tissue destruction and secondary bacterial infections. Although they primarily affect livestock, such as cattle and horses, the flies can also lay eggs on people and other warm-blooded animals, both domestic and wild. For more information about the animals affected by the outbreak, please see [Current Status of New World Screwworm | Screwworm.gov](#). NWS is not directly contagious between animals or humans, as both are infested by adult flies in the environment.

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RISK FACTORS

- People who travel to areas known to have NWS cases in humans and animals (e.g., Mexico, Central America, South America, and some countries in the Caribbean) may be at increased risk, especially if they:
 - Have an open wound, including scratches, cuts, insect bites, or surgical wounds.
 - Have a medical condition that might affect how quickly a wound heals, or that may cause bleeding or open sores (e.g., skin cancer, psoriasis, or eczema).
 - Are very old or very young.
 - Experience malnutrition.
 - Sleep outdoors, especially during daytime hours when NWS flies are most active.
 - Live, work, or spend an extended amount of time near livestock or other warm-blooded animals in these areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

- **REPORT** all suspected human cases immediately to the OSDH Epidemiologist-on-call at 405.426.8710.
 - The Epidemiologist-on-Call will consult with the provider on specimen collection and submission for confirmation.
- **CONSIDER** NWS in patients with visible larvae or egg masses in a wound, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, or other bodily orifice, with destruction of healthy tissue, who report sensation of movement, foul odor, bloody discharge, swelling, and pain in individuals with recent travel (within 10 days before symptom onset) to a country where NWS is present.
- **COLLECT** all suspected NWS larvae and eggs and place them in a leak-proof container with 70% ethanol or isopropanol. **Do not dispose of any larvae (maggots) or eggs in the trash or outside on the ground.**
 - Alcohol will kill the larvae and preserve them for identification.
 - Surgical removal may be necessary to ensure no larvae and eggs remain.
 - After extraction, select 10 larvae for laboratory identification and place them into a second vial with 70% ethanol.
 - If there are fewer than 10 larvae collected, submit them all.
 - Ensure the larvae chosen for collection are collected from different depths within the wound to provide a representative sample.
- **TREATMENT** is primarily through the removal of all larvae and eggs from the affected site. Medications to treat or prevent secondary bacterial infections may be needed.
 - There is no medication that can treat NWS infestation in people.
 - Reexamine treated lesions after 24-48 hours to confirm no larvae remain.
- **ADVISE** patients who may be traveling to countries where NWS is present to:
 - Clean and cover all wounds, no matter how small or the location on the body.

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- Wear loose-fitting, long-sleeved shirts and pants, socks, and hats to limit exposed skin and use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-registered insect repellents](#).
- If possible, avoid spending time where livestock are located.
- Avoid sleeping outdoors, especially during daytime hours when NWS flies are most active.
- Use bed nets to protect sleeping quarters from insects if windows are left open and not screened. In hospitals, screening windows and doors is essential.
- Refer to the CDC NWS website: [New World Screwworm Myiasis, Recommendations for Healthcare Providers](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LABORATORIES

- **REPORT all suspected human cases immediately** to the OSDH Epidemiologist-on-call at 405.426.8710. The Epidemiologist-on-Call will consult with the laboratory on specimen collection and submission for confirmation.
- During consultations with the OSDH, laboratorians may be asked to submit images of larvae from humans for telediagnosis.
- Ensure **all** larvae are placed in a leak-proof container containing a volume of liquid sufficient to fully submerge larvae. 70% ethanol (preferred) will both kill and preserve the larvae and eggs for identification. Alternatives include 70% (or greater) isopropanol. **Do not dispose of any larvae (maggots) or eggs in the trash or outside on the ground.**
 - Select 10 larvae for laboratory identification.
 - If there are fewer than 10 larvae collected, submit them all.
 - Ensure the larvae chosen for collection are collected from different depths within the wound to provide a representative sample.
- Larvae identification will need to be confirmed at CDC. The OSDH Epidemiologist-on-call will work with the laboratory to coordinate shipment of the patient specimens (larvae) to the CDC for confirmation. Refer to the [Telediagnosis of New World Screwworm](#) (bench aid) | CDC for guidance on identifying NWS larvae.
- Refer to **APPENDIX A: OSDH NWS LabAid** for details on specimen shipping and handling.

For More Information About New World screwworm

- [About New World Screwworm | CDC](#) / In Spanish: [Acerca de la miasis por el gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo | El gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo | CDC](#)
- [New World Screwworm Outbreak | CDC](#)
- [Clinical Overview of New World Screwworm | CDC](#) / In Spanish: [Información clínica sobre la miasis por el gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo | CDC](#)
- [Resurgence of New World Screwworm in the Americas: What Healthcare Providers Need to Know | COCA | C](#)

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- [Laboratory Identification of New World Screwworm \(bench aid\) | CDC](#) / In Spanish: [Identificación en laboratorio del gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo \(bench aid\) | CDC](#)
- [Telediagnosis of New World Screwworm \(bench aid\) | CDC](#)
- [COPEG: Country-Specific information on NWS](#)
- [gov | Stop Screwworm: Unified Government Response to Protect the United States | USDA](#)
- [New World Screwworm | USDA](#)
- [New World Screwworm: What You Need to Know \(brochure\) | USDA](#) / In Spanish: [Gusano barrenador del Nuevo Mundo: Lo que necesita saber \(folleto\) | USDA](#)
- [New World Screwworm \(story map\) | USDA](#)
- [Screwworm: An International Threat to Human and Animal Health \(poster\) | USDA](#)
- [New World Screwworm Draft Response Playbook | APHIS | USDA](#)

Preventing insect bites

- [Preventing Mosquito Bites | CDC](#)
- [Preventing Mosquito Bites While Traveling | CDC](#)
- [About Permethrin-Treated Clothing and Gear | CDC](#)
- [How to Prevent Mosquito and Tick Bites | CDC](#)
- [Repellents: Protection against Mosquitoes, Ticks and Other Arthropods | EPA](#)

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This message has been distributed to Primary Care and Infectious Disease Physicians, Family Medicine Physicians, Pediatricians, Infection Preventionists, Laboratorians, Urgent Care Centers, Emergency Departments, and State and Local Health Officials

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Acute Disease Service (ADS) is now using 4 types of documents to provide important information to medical and public health professionals, and to other interested persons:

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert

Provides vital, time-sensitive information for a specific incident or situation; warrants immediate action or attention by health officials, laboratorians, clinicians, and members of the public and conveys the highest level of importance.

Health Advisory

Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; contains recommendations or actionable items to be performed by public health officials, laboratorians, and/or clinicians; may not require immediate action.

Health Update

Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate attention.

Health Info/Event

Provides general public health information; unlikely to require immediate action.

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Specimen Submission Guidance for Identification of Human Cases of New World Screwworm (NWS)

Immediately Report all Human NWS Cases to the [Epidemiologist-On-Call at 405-426-8710](tel:405-426-8710)
Report Animal NWS Cases to the [State Veterinarian's Office at 405-522-6141](tel:405-522-6141)

Specimen Collection

- **Use:** A leakproof container with enough 70% ethanol or isopropanol to submerge all sampled larvae.
- All larvae extracted from a wound should be placed immediately in 70% ethanol or isopropanol in a leakproof container.
- After extraction, select 10 larvae for laboratory identification and place them into a second vial with 70% ethanol.
- If there are fewer than 10 larvae collected, submit them all.
- Ensure that the larvae chosen for collection are collected from different depths within the wound to provide a representative sample.
- Clearly label the specimen container with *at least* **two patient identifiers** and **date of collection**.



New World Screwworm larvae.
Photo by Sohath Yusseff-Vanegas, USDA ARS

Specimen Disposal

- Submerge all remaining larvae and eggs in 70% ethanol or isopropanol in a separate leak-proof container and seal it in a zip-lock plastic bag.
- Dispose of the sealed bag according to your facility's medical waste disposal protocol.
- **Do not dispose of any larvae in the trash or outside in the ground.**
- Failure to properly kill and dispose of all NWS larvae or eggs may result in accidental introduction of NWS into the local environment.

Shipping NWS Specimens to the Laboratory

- The OSDH PHL accepts NWS specimens from healthcare providers.
- Ensure that sufficient absorbent materials (e.g., paper towels) are included to fully absorb the entire contents of the specimen container in the event of a leakage.
- Verify that all specimen tubes are tightly closed and leakproof prior to packaging. Further secure tube caps by wrapping with paraffin film (e.g., Parafilm) to prevent accidental opening during transit.
- Submit each specimen with a fully completed [ODH Form 419](#)
- Refer to the [OSDH PHL website](#) for more details.



*Adapted from materials developed by Texas DSHS Austin Laboratory.



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Completing ODH Form 419

A. Provide Patient Identifiers

Ensure all patient identifiers are provided, including the patient's first and last name and date of birth.

B. Submitting Facility Information

The **Submitter Information** section must be completed to document the specimen's origin and ensure proper tracking and communication.

C. Complete Specimen Information

In the **Specimen Information** section, indicate **Collection Date**, select the "Other" box and specify in the "Site Location/Description" field that the specimen is a worm, including the exact location where it was collected.

D. Indicate Requested Test

In the **Test Request** section, select the "Other Test Requests" box and specify "New World Screwworm".

Questions? Please contact:

NWS Testing/Identification: 405-564-7750 or PublicHealthLab@health.ok.gov

NWS Case Reporting: OSDH Epidemiologist-on-Call at 405-426-8710

Animal NWS: Oklahoma State Veterinarian's Office at 405-522-6141 or [Online Animal Reporting](#)

Overnight Shipping Address: Oklahoma State Department of Health Public Health Laboratory, 4615 W. Lakeview Rd. Stillwater, OK 74075-0802

*Adapted from materials developed by Texas DSHS Austin Laboratory.

Public Health Laboratory Test Requisition Form

Section A: Patient Information

Name* (last, first, middle) _____ (initial) _____ DOB* 01 / 01 / 1900
Address 123 Water Road _____ City _____ State OK Zip 74068 Phone 123-123-1234
Race: Black/African American Asian Multiracial Unknown Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander American Indian/Alaska Native
CIA regulations require that each specimen container include two unique patient identifiers. All patient identifiers listed on this form must exactly match the information on the specimen collection container and laboratory use the unique ID for tracking.

Section B: Submitter Information

Practitioner* (last name) _____ (first) _____ (initial) _____ (NPI) _____
Submitting Facility* _____ Phone # () _____ Fax # () _____
Address* _____ City* _____ State* _____ Zip* _____
Collecting Facility (if different from Submitting Facility) _____ Phone # () _____

Section C: Clinical Information

Diagnosis _____ Onset (mm-dd-yy) / /
Antibiotics (if with more dates) _____

Section D: Specimen Information

Collection Date* (mm-dd-yy) 02 / 15 / 2026 Time (hr:min) 08:30 AM PM By Dr. Jane Doe
Source: Specimen Isolate Indicate specimen type and site information, as applicable
 Abscess/lesion Blood Bronchial wash Eye, L, R Cerebrospinal Pleural Sputum Urine
 CSF Bone marrow Cerebro Gastric lavage Pericardial fluid Serum Synovial fluid Vaginal
 Biopsy (skin) Blood smear CSF Nasal wash Pleural fluid Sputum, expect. Tissue Tracheal aspirate
 Biopsy wound Bronchial brush Cerebrospinal Cerebrospinal Pleural fluid Sputum, induced Tracheal aspirate
Site Location/Description of approach: Worm - Right Leg

Section E: Test Request (Select one only). Note: For details on specimen collection, type and volume, and packaging/shipping, see the ODH PHL Test Manual.

Bacteriology - Isolate

Include Microbiology Supplemental Form with each submission. Order path for *Francisella* bacterium isolate (do in section at end of this form).

Enteric Pathogen, isolate identification
 Salmonella spp. Shigella spp. Escherichia coli O157
 Non-O157 enterohemorrhagic E. coli (EHEC) Listeria spp.
 Campylobacter spp. Yersinia spp. (not Y. pestis) Vibrio spp.
 Clostridium spp. Aeromonas spp. Neisseria spp.
 GI isolate Sterile Site Isolate

Non-enteric Pathogen, isolate identification
 Legionella spp. Corynebacterium diphtheriae / C. ulcerans
 Neisseria meningitidis (sterile site only)
 Listeria monocytogenes (sterile site only)
 Listeria monocytogenes (sterile site only)
 Other isolate (specify organism)

Microbiology - Clinical

Enteric Pathogen Panel, isolation and ID (Cary-Blair Medium only)
 Bordetella spp. (contact ODH IDPH for approval)
 Serotype (contact ODH IDPH for approval)
 Serotype (contact ODH IDPH for approval)

Antibiotic Resistance Determination

Carbapenem resistant Acinetobacter spp. (include AST report)
 Carbapenem resistant Enterobacteriaceae (include AST report)
 Carbapenem resistant Pseudomonas aeruginosa (include AST report)
Highly Hazardous and Susceptible Bacterial Organisms
C61 2017 011 (MS) 1030-3511 prior to submission. Include biochemical results on Microbiology Supplemental Form.
 Bacillus anthracis Brucella spp. Ebola Virus Francisella tularensis Marburg Virus Smallpox Yersinia pestis
 Other

Microbiology - Serology

Influenza A/B, RSV, SARS-CoV-2 Respiratory Panel
 Influenza Virus A and B, PIV-1/2/3/4 Respiratory A Subtyping
 Arbovirus Detection (contact ODH IDPH for approval)
 Measles Virus (contact ODH IDPH for approval)
 Mumps Virus (contact ODH IDPH for approval)
 Non-Variola Orthopoxvirus (contact PHL prior to submission)
Sexually Transmitted Diseases
 Treponema denticulatum / Neisseria gonorrhoeae (CT/NG, NAAT)
 HIV-1/2 (Ab and RNA) Ag. (antibody/antigen only)
 Syphilis, Screen with Reflex to RPR, RPR Tit, TP-PA
 Syphilis, RPR with Reflex to Titer
 HIV and Syphilis (approved submitter only)
Mycobacteriology / Mycology
 Mold isolate, identification
 Yeast isolate, identification
 Mycobacteria (AFB), Screen and Culture with Reflex to ID
 Mycobacteria (AFB), Isolate ID

Parasitology

Parasitology spp.
 Other Test Request
 New World Screwworms

* For 24/7 after-hours Disease Prevention and Response (DPDR) Epidemiologist consultation, call (405) 426-8710

ODH Form 419 (03/17/2026)



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