

Bastrop County Public Health Department **FACT SHEET**

June 11, 2026

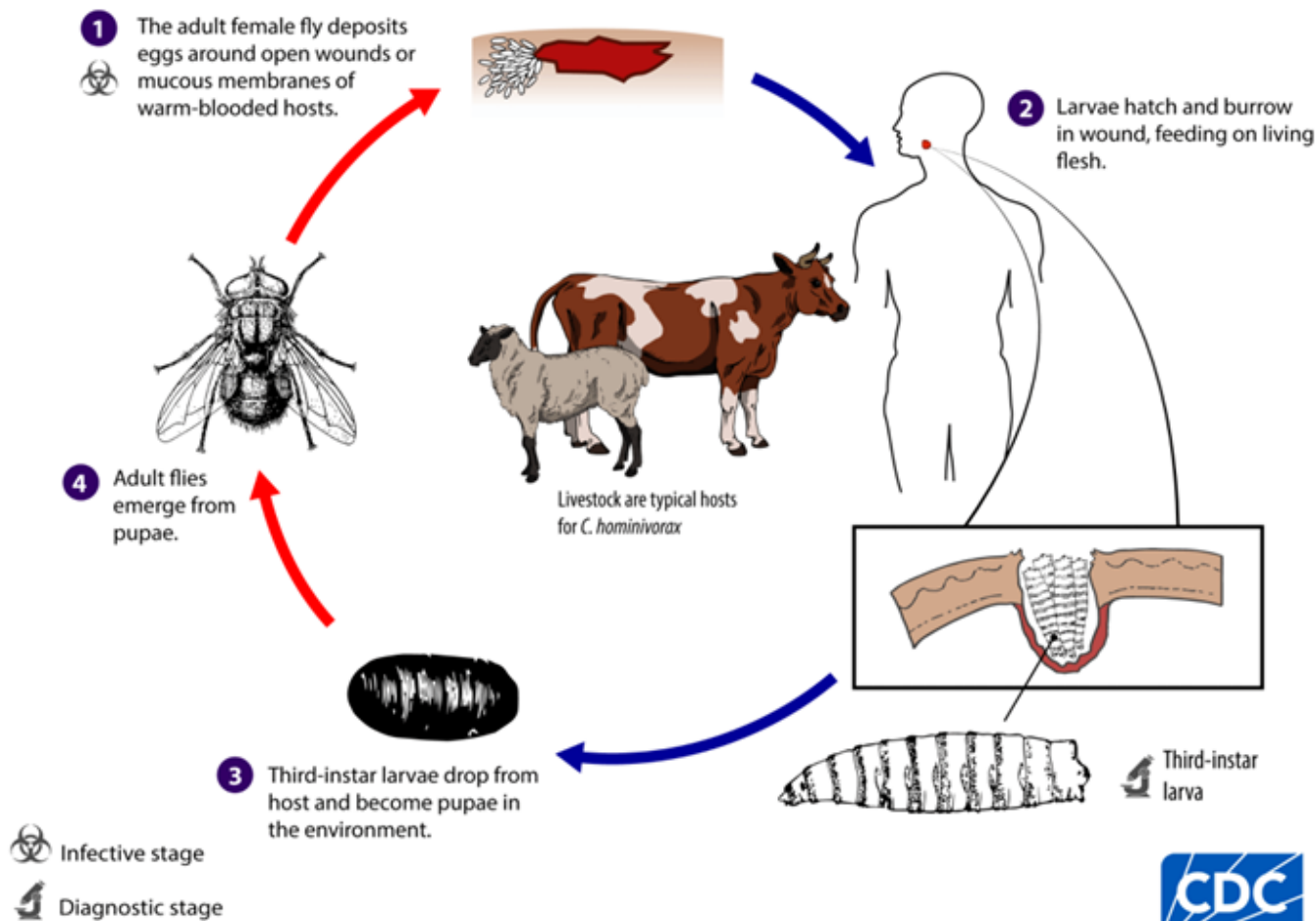
New World Screwworm (NWS) Fact Sheet

What is NWS?

- New World screwworm (NWS, *Cochliomyia hominivorax*) is a parasitic fly that can affect any warm-blooded animals, including birds, chickens, livestock, pets, wildlife, and, in rare cases, people. Adult screwworm flies are about the size of a common housefly. These flies lay eggs in the living tissue of wounds in warm-blooded animals and their larvae (maggots) feed on the flesh. The name screwworm comes from the way the maggots “screw” or burrow into the wound, causing extensive damage to the host by tearing away tissue. As the maggots continue to burrow and feed on the living tissue, they open the wound to infection which can be fatal if left untreated. Later stages of the maggots will fall out of the wound to pupate in the soil and continue the flies' lifecycle.

Cochliomyia hominivorax

4DPDx



Prevention

- **For Animals:**

- Watch out for signs of NWS in animals, livestock, and pets
- Protect pets, animals, and livestock from other wound-causing parasites such as ticks
- Make sure to handle livestock carefully, always clean equipment, and inspect the equipment for sharp objects that can potentially cause wounds
- If a wound occurs: treat it promptly and maintain sanitation

- **For People:**

- Keep open wounds clean and covered
- Sleep indoors when possible with closed or screened windows
- If outside: sleep under a bed net or in a screened tent
- Protect skin from insect bites by
 - Using an EPA-registered insect repellent
 - Treat clothes with 0.5% permethrin
 - Wear clothes that do not expose the skin

* Note that insect bite prevention is important to prevent open wounds which attract the NWS, these flies do not bite so they are not affected by insect repellent

Treatment and Control

- If you see maggots on any animal, report it immediately
- If you see or feel maggots in or around a wound on your body, contact a healthcare provider immediately.
 - Do not try to remove any maggots or eggs yourself. If any maggots fall off of the wound, place them in a leak-proof container with rubbing alcohol and bring it to your physician.
- Do not throw any live maggots in the trash or place outside - this could lead to NWS spreading in your area
- Sterile insect technique is for controlling NWS
 - Sterile male flies are released to mate with wild female NWS flies to produce unfertilized eggs. Since female flies only mate once, this will significantly help reduce the population size of NWS flies

Resources

<https://nri.tamu.edu/search?q=screwworm>

<https://www.cdc.gov/new-world-screwworm/media/pdfs/2025/09/NWS-What-You-Need-to-Know-cleared-508.pdf>

<https://agriflifeextension.tamu.edu/new-world-screwworm-fact-sheet/>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/sites/default/files/nws-myth-busters.pdf>

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/screwworm>

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