

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2026

New World Screwworm Confirmed in Texas: Here's What Pet Owners Need to Know

AUSTIN, Texas — The Texas Veterinary Medical Association (TVMA) is alerting Texas pet owners that New World Screwworm (NWS) has been confirmed in Zavala County, Texas, the first detection in the United States since the pest was eradicated in 1966. NWS flies lay eggs in wounds or skin openings of mammals, and their larvae feed on living tissue, which can cause severe damage and even death if left untreated. While that sounds alarming, NWS can be treated successfully when caught early. The case in Zavala County was identified in a calf, but dogs, cats, and other companion animals are also at risk, so pet owners across the state should keep a close eye on their animals.

There is no need to panic. The United States successfully eradicated NWS before, and state and federal agencies have been preparing for this moment for more than a year. Response efforts are already underway in South Texas, approved treatments are available, and animal health officials are on the ground across the region.

What Pet Owners Should Watch For

Even small breaks in the skin, including scratches, insect bites, or surgical incisions, can be places where flies can lay eggs. Pet owners should watch for:

- Any wound, no matter how small, that shows unusual swelling or discharge
- A foul or distinctive odor coming from a wound
- Behavioral changes such as pain, excessive licking or chewing at a wound, loss of appetite, or unusual tiredness

What to Do If You Suspect NWS

If you notice any of these signs, contact your veterinarian immediately. Do not attempt to treat the wound at home. There are no safe home remedies. Your veterinarian will examine your pet and can collect and submit samples for official testing if NWS is suspected.

If you suspect a case, keep the animal where it is and wait for your veterinarian's instructions, since human movement of infected animals is a primary way NWS



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spreads. You also should report suspicious cases directly to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) veterinarian on call at 1-800-550-8242.

The Bottom Line

Check your pets regularly for wounds, keep them clean, and call your veterinarian right away if you see anything unusual. Early detection is critical, not just for your pet, but for the broader effort to protect Texas pets, livestock, wildlife, and people.

About the Texas Veterinary Medical Association

Founded in 1903, TVMA represents the interests of more than 13,000 licensed veterinarians and paraprofessionals across Texas. For more information, visit www.tvma.org or contact TVMA Director of Government Relations/General Counsel Trent Hightower at 512-610-6656.