



BEST PRACTICES **for Screwworm Detection** **& Reporting in Wildlife**

The Texas Wildlife Association is committed to providing landowners with timely, sound, and practical information on how to best protect your lands and wildlife from the threat of the New World Screwworm. This guide provides science-backed actions to be employed before, during and after detected NWS infestations. Being proactive in surveillance and response is the most effective way to mitigate the risk posed by this invasive pest.



1. Build a detection network before you need it



For Texas, surveillance needs to be year-round, not just spring through fall. TPWD notes that screwworm infestations can occur year-round in temperate regions such as South Texas.

Use every set of eyes you already have: biologists, ranch staff, hunters, guides, helicopter crews, feed-truck drivers, cleaning staff, neighbors, outfitters, and taxidermists. Give them a simple rule: any live animal with maggots gets reported immediately.

Give pre-authorization to appropriate personnel to remove suspected animals on site. TPWD has a humane dispatch clause on their books that makes this legal outside of deer season.

For native wildlife, report to your local TPWD biologist or **TPWD at 512-389-4505**. For livestock or exotic wildlife, TAHC lists 800-550-8242.

2. Train crews on what to look for



The key signs are:

WATCH FOR	WHY IT MATTERS
Open wounds or sores with larvae	Classic field sign
Foul, rotting-flesh odor	Strong warning sign
Head shaking, irritation, isolation, lethargy	Especially useful in free-ranging wildlife
Wounds around eyes, nose, ears, mouth, genitalia, newborn navels	High-risk tissues
Velvet injuries, antler shedding sites, fight wounds, tick bites, stings	Small wounds can start the problem

Wounds as small as tick bites can become infested, and common sites include head, neck, newborn umbilical region, mucous membranes, and antler-related wounds. Also, damaged skin, tick bites, antler/velvet shedding, and management wounds like tagging, are common infestation sites.

3. Put trail cameras to work like disease-surveillance tools



Use cameras at water, feed, mineral, trails, crossings, fence gaps, senderos, and feeder sites.

If you have a feeder fence for hogs, place some cameras facing outside of fence to get images of fawns that can't jump into the fence.

For each camera set, create a quick review protocol:

ITEM	PRACTICE
Review frequency	Daily to every few days during high-risk periods (fawning and antler drop)
Flag criteria	Visible wound, head shaking, isolation, drooped posture, genital/navel wound, antler wound
Photo handling	Save image/video, location, date, time, species, sex/age if known
Escalation	Pursue and remove any suspicious animal exhibiting symptoms of an NWS infestation and immediately contact your local TPWD wildlife biologist or game warden

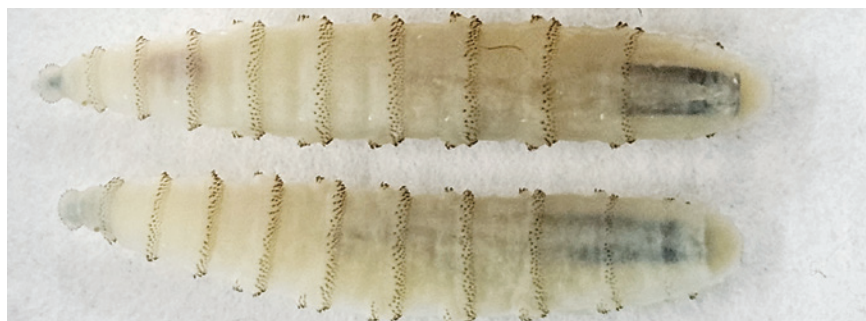
4. Intensify monitoring during biological risk windows

For deer and other wild mammals, the highest practical surveillance periods are:



PERIOD	WILDLIFE RISK
Fawning / birthing	Does and newborns, especially genital tissue and navels
Velvet growth / velvet injury	Bucks with open antler wounds
Antler shedding	Fresh pedicle wounds
Rut	Fight wounds, especially mature males
Helicopter Survey	Consider delaying until after antlers harden, or not doing a helicopter survey until the NWS is eradicated from Texas counties that have identified NWS zones.
Helicopter Hog Hunts	Considering delaying until the NWS is eradicated from Texas counties that have identified zones.

Photo Courtesy: USDA Agriculture Research Service



New World Screwworm Larvae

5. Tighten movement and carcass disposal



For harvested or dead wildlife suspected of infestation:

DO	DO NOT
Keep carcass on tarp/plastic/hard surface	Let larvae drop into soil
Remove larvae or cut out affected tissue	Toss infested remains on the landscape
Put larvae in sealed container with 70% alcohol	Transport infested carcass parts out of an infested area
Double-bag and freeze affected parts	Consume sick or infested wildlife
Burn, freeze, or bury carcass at least 4 feet deep with compacted soil.	Drag or move infested animal before mitigating larvae.

Photo Courtesy: National Deer Association

Infested carcasses should not be removed from the property of harvest.



Deer New World Screwworm Myiasis

6. Have a sampling kit ready in every ranch truck

A basic kit should include:

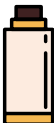


ITEM	PURPOSE
Screw-cap vials	Larval samples
70% isopropyl alcohol	Preserve larvae
Forceps / Tweezers / Scalpel	Remove larvae. Cut open wound to treat deeper larvae
Disposable gloves	PPE
Zip bags	Secondary containment
Sharpie / waterproof labels	Date, ranch, pasture, GPS, species
Phone with GPS/photo capability	Documentation
Small tarp or contractor bags	Carcass handling
Cooler / freezer access	Holding affected tissue

TPWD says larvae (maggots) submitted as a sample should be taken from all parts of the wound including the deepest part of the wound, placed in a vial or screw-cap container, submerged in 70% alcohol, sealed, bagged. Contact your local TPWD biologist immediately.



7. Treat captive or temporarily restrained animals under TPWD permitted activities



Treatment of free-ranging wildlife has limited application that may only be permissible under the authority of TPWD permitted activities. Any treatments should be in coordination with a veterinarian. Don't freelance drug protocols in wildlife.

FDA approved treatments for captive wildlife are listed below and require a Veterinarian-Client-Patient-Relationship (VCPR) Key points:

PRODUCT	WILDLIFE USE NOTES
Injectable Dectomax / Dectomax-CA1	Preventative use in deer only; not for existing myiasis (active maggot infested wound); withdrawal considerations apply
F-10 antiseptic wound spray or ointment with insecticide	Treatment and preventative use for captive wildlife and temporarily captured animals; not free-range
Negasunt / Tanidil	State-veterinarian / USDA NVS-type access; mainly captive or temporarily captured wildlife depending on product and species
Ivermectin	Do not lace corn with Ivermectin until proven effective by current scientific trials



The USDA chart states Dectomax/Dectomax-CA1 may be effective for prevention of wound myiasis in deer but is not authorized for treatment of existing myiasis or prevention of reinfestation in deer; it also says underdosing may cause ineffective treatment and promote resistance/immunity. The same chart lists F-10 wound spray/ointment as topical treatment and preventative options for captive wildlife and temporarily captured animals, Negasunt and Tanidil have restricted access through state veterinarians or authorized personnel.

8. If larvae are found, remove and destroy all larvae

The goal is not just treating the animal; it is breaking the fly life cycle. TPWD says that if a living animal is infested, all larvae should be removed and destroyed to prevent them from dropping to the ground and pupating into adult flies.



9. Protect people, dogs, horses, and working animals too

This is mainly an animal health problem, but people can be infested in rare cases. CDC says human symptoms can include painful non-healing wounds, foul odor or bleeding, and seeing or feeling maggots in wounds or body areas such as nose, mouth, eyes, ears, or genitals.

For field crews: cover open wounds, use repellents, wear gloves when handling suspicious carcasses or larvae, and don't let dogs with cuts run around suspect carcasses. TPWD recommends keeping wounds on animals and people clean and covered, treating clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin, and carrying proper human-grade repellents.

Inspect all working pens (livestock and captive wildlife) for sharp points or anything that could cause a wound, remove all suspect points of possible injury.

10. Keep records

For each suspected observation, record:

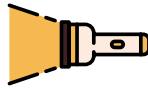


FIELD	EXAMPLE
Date/time	July 7, 2026, 7:15 AM
Location	Ranch, pasture, GPS, nearest water
Species	White-tailed deer, nilgai, axis, coyote, turkey
Sex/age class	Adult buck, doe/fawn, unknown
Clinical signs	Wound location, maggots visible, odor, behavior
Media	Camera photo, video, phone photo
Action	Reported to TPWD/TAHC, sample collected, carcass frozen/buried
Outcome	Confirmed, ruled out, pending

Common NWS wildlife terminology for record keeping.

- 1) **Wildlife with wounds.** Important because wounds can be entry points for NWS.
- 2) **Animals of interest.** These are wildlife that have wounds that look different than “normal” wounds and the animal may also be exhibiting unusual behaviors. It is important to continue to monitor animals of interest to see if the wounds are healing or turning into something that may become suspicious.
- 3) **Suspicious case.** An animal with wound where visible myiasis can be seen or maggots on a living animal. A suspicious animal is one that should be obtained for closer examination.
- 4) **Suspect.** An animal becomes a suspect if samples are submitted to a lab for confirmation.

11. Prioritized action plan



- **Immediate:** create a reporting contact sheet, put sampling kits in trucks, brief staff and hunters, start camera review at water/feed/trails, and report any live animal with larvae.
- **If suspected:** harvest immediately, report immediately, collect larvae only if safe and appropriate, preserve in 70% alcohol, prevent larvae from entering soil, and coordinate with TPWD/TAHC before treatment or movement.
- **Notify Neighbors:** contact all surrounding landowners and let them know you have a pending case of NWS.



The main idea: Detect fast, harvest fast, report fast, prevent larvae from completing their life cycle, and don't move infested animals or carcass parts.

12. After a detection

Once TPWD or TAHC are notified they will send the sample off to determine if it is a New World Screwworm. Positive results will inform the boundaries of the “infested zone” and “surveillance zone” in that area. APHIS will begin releasing sterile flies in the zones.



Photo Courtesy: Reuters



Sterile New World Screwworm Fly



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