

First U.S. Human Case of Flesh-Eating Screwworm Reported



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Washington, August 25, 2025 The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) confirmed

Monday the first human case of the New World screwworm parasite in the United States.

The case, linked to a traveler recently returning from El Salvador, was verified by the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “This is the first human case of travel-associated New

World screwworm myiasis identified in the United States,” said HHS spokesperson Emily G.

Hilliard, adding that the overall public health risk remains low.

The parasite, the larvae of the New World screwworm fly (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*), is notorious for devastating livestock and wildlife. Once eradicated in North America, it has resurged in parts of Central America and Mexico in recent years. U.S. officials warn that an outbreak could cost Texas agriculture alone an estimated \$1.8 billion.

To prevent its spread, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced a five-part eradication strategy earlier this month in Texas. The plan includes aerial release of billions of sterilized male flies over southern Texas and northern Mexico, a method proven effective during past outbreaks.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott underscored the threat to the state's \$867 billion agriculture industry, warning of risks to 2 million jobs.

Though human infections are rare and treatable, the parasite's return has sparked urgency among federal and state agencies to accelerate containment efforts.