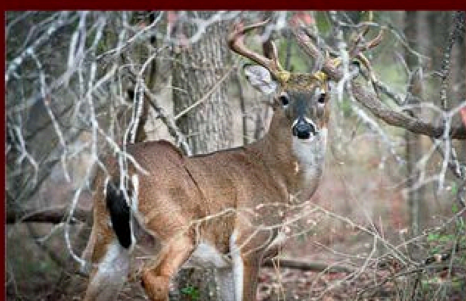
✦AUGUST 2025
VOLUME 19, ISSUE 4

Nueces Agriculture

"IMPROVING FOOD & FIBER PRODUCTION"

COASTAL BEND WHITE-TAILED DEER SYMPOSIUM

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension



August 29, 2025
7:30 am - 4:30 pm

RMB Fairgrounds
1213 Terry Shamsie Blvd
Robstown, TX 78380

Scan the QR code to register or call 361.767.5223 to pre-register.

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/coastal-bend-white-tailed-deer-and-wildlife-symposium-tickets-1303440729309?aff=oddtdtcreator

FARM WORKER PROTECTION SAFETY TRAINING

When…. Friday, September 5, 2025
Where…. A&M AgriLife Ext. Office
710 East Main, Ste. 1, Robstown, TX
Time…. 8:30 AM
Call to Pre-Register…. (361) 767-5223

Fee: $10.00 (Includes WPS training card)

Pesticide handlers and workers must receive annual training unless they are certified applicators. All participants in this training will be issued a card verifying they have successfully completed the required training.

PRIVATE APPLICATOR TRAINING

When…. Friday, September 5, 2025
Where…. A&M AgriLife Ext. Office
710 East Main, Ste. 1, Robstown, TX
Time…. 8:30 AM
Call to Pre-Register…. (361) 767-5223

Fee: $65.00 (Includes study manuals)

A Private Applicator is defined by law as a person who uses or supervises the use of a restricted-use or state-limited use pesticide for the purpose of producing an agricultural commodity.

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Coastal Bend White-tailed Deer Symposium
August 29, 2025

Richard M Borchard Fairgrounds
Robstown, Texas
7:30 am- 4:30 pm

Lunch, door prizes, vendors

3 CEU's
1 IPM
2 Gen

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Topics included:

New World Screwworm

Herd Dynamics-Nutrition**- Wildlife Tax Valuation

Chronic Wasting Disease

Integrating Deer & Livestock Management

Habitat management- Pre & Post Harvest Data

Feral Hog & Predator Management

Program Cost: $50.00

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Registration link

Payment: will be accepted in advance or at the door (cash, check, or credit card) Make checks payable to Nueces County Program Council and mail to 710 E. Main Ste. 1, Robstown, TX 78380

For questions contact:
Philip Shackelford 979-203-5633

OR CALL 361.767.5223 TO PRE-REGISTER

Livestock Management Considerations for New World Screwworm

Thomas B. Hairgrove[1], Jacob W. Thorne[2], Ron Gill[3], Andy D. Herring[4], Phillip Kaufman[5], Sonja L. Swiger[5]

Introduction

The New World screwworm (NWS), *Cochliomyia hominivorax*, once eradicated from the U.S. in 1966, remains a threat due to potential reintroduction along the southern border. These parasitic flies cause severe wounds by feeding on live tissue, leading to rapid health declines and even death in livestock. Proactive livestock management and seasonal planning are essential in reducing the risk of NWS infestation.

For more detailed background and biological information, refer to the full technical bulletin.[6]

Screwworm larva
(Michael Miller/Texas A&M AgriLife)

Understanding the Threat

- NWS flies lay eggs in wounds, including those in mucous membranes.
- Larvae burrow into live tissue, leading to a condition called myiasis.
- NWS typically does not transfer from infected animals to others, however larvae will feed on the same animal for 5-7 days before dropping off to complete their life cycle in soil.
- Spread occurs mainly through human transport of infected animals.

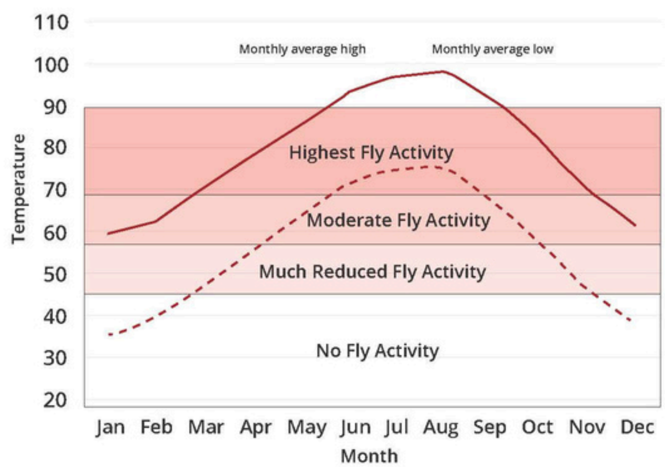
Adult New World screwworm fly
(Michael Miller/Texas A&M AgriLife)

Seasonal Management Recommendations

NWS activity is temperature-dependent:

- **High risk:** 80°F+ with 30–70% relative humidity (life cycle in 2–3 weeks).
- **Moderate risk:** Temperate weather (life cycle in 3–4 weeks).
- **Low risk:** Below 59°F (life cycle in 2–3 months or less active).

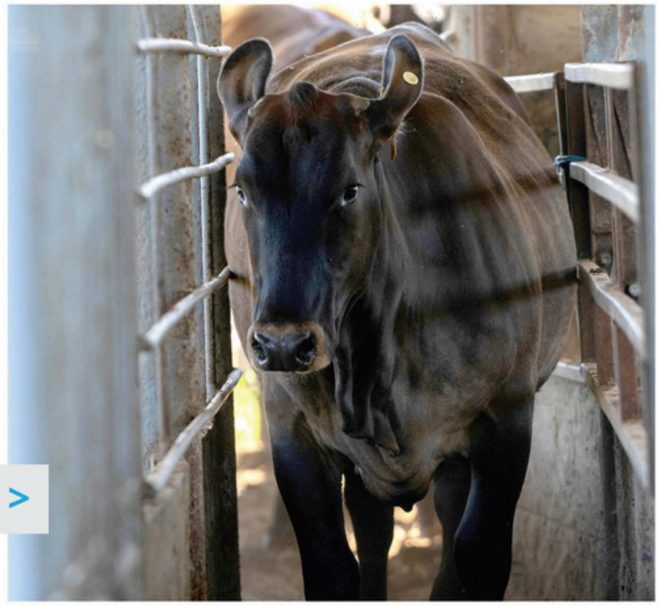
Average high and low temperatures (°F) across the year for Central TX, 2000-2024



To reduce exposure:

- Align breeding and birthing seasons with cooler months to avoid peak fly season.
- Avoid year-round exposure by defining breeding periods.
- Winter births may reduce risk and result in stronger post-weaning prices.

While some management practices can be confined to seasons with lower fly activity, it is not realistic that every operation can immediately reschedule management during these times. The important take-home message is that if flies are active and livestock have wounds of any size, diligence in monitoring for pests and utilizing best management practices to promote healing are critical.



Management Practices to Adjust

Low Fly Season (Cooler)	High Fly Season (Warmer)
Calving/lambing/kidding	Reconsider any elective wound-causing tasks
Castration	Apply fly repellent at working facilities
Ear tagging or marking/branding	Increase frequency of livestock checks
Dehorning, tail docking	Promptly treat all wounds
Shearing, implant placement	Cover surgical wounds if possible

Many common livestock procedures create wounds attractive to NWS flies. If these practices fall during high-risk months, increase observation and treatment.

Monitoring and Surveillance

- Regularly check animals after any procedure.
- Watch for odor, tissue damage or signs of myiasis.
- Be especially observant with fiber animals due to nicking during shearing.

A good practice for all livestock owners is to have a checklist of biosecurity measures.

Livestock Producer Biosecurity Checklist			
✓	Identify a regional veterinarian you can contact.	✓	Consider transportation schedules of animals relative to operation type.
✓	Build a relationship with your AgriLife Extension county agent.	✓	Use best management practices from quality assurance programs.
✓	Analyze your risks and develop a plan of action.	✓	Monitor wildlife populations, hunting and recreational activities.
✓	Surveillance: Be vigilant, stay alert and report abnormal or suspicious events.	✓	Check the coats, ears and feet of livestock/ guard dogs and companion animals.
✓	Build relationships with your neighbors for open conversations about suspicious events.	✓	Observe animals regularly after castration or other surgical procedures, until completely healed.
✓	Monitor for ticks and other external parasites.	✓	Keep squeeze chutes, alleys, etc. in good repair to prevent accidental wounds.

Conclusion

Effective management of the New World screwworm risk requires aligning your livestock production practices with seasonal fly activity. When possible, schedule higher-risk procedures — such as castration, tagging or shearing — during cooler months when fly activity is lower. Maintain a regular surveillance routine to monitor animal health and wounds and respond quickly to any signs of infestation.

If you suspect New World screwworm in your livestock, do not wait. Contact the following authorities immediately:

- **Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC)** for livestock and pets**: 800-550-8242.**
- **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD)** for wildlife: **512-389-4505.**

You should also contact your private veterinarian to assist with diagnosis and help coordinate sample collection and treatment. Prompt reporting and treatment are key to preventing the spread of NWS and minimizing long-term damage to the health of your herd and the livestock industry as a whole.

For complete management guidance and additional background, refer to the July 2025 technical bulletin: "Rethinking Livestock Management to Consider Screwworm.

[1]Professor and Extension Veterinary Specialist, Department of Animal Science, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife
[2]Assistant Professor and Extension Sheep and Goat Specialist, Department of Animal Science, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife
[3]Professor and Extension Livestock Specialist, Department of Animal Science, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife
[4]Professor, Department of Animal Science, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife
[5]Professor, Department of Entomology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife
[6]Rethinking Livestock Management to Consider Screwworm" (July 2025).

Diligence Key to Mitigating Screwworm Threat

Prioritize cattle surveillance and wound care

By: Elanco, Drovers; July 29, 2025

The New World screwworm threat could be the top livestock health topic of 2025. Although it is predominantly found in Central and South America, it has appeared sporadically in the United States since national eradication efforts were implemented in the 1960s. The last outbreak occurred in the Florida Keys in 2016.

Despite its name, the New World screwworm (Cochliomyia hominivorax) is not a worm; it's a fly. But the screwworm is not your average fly.

A female screwworm only lays her eggs in open wounds, including castration sites and lacerations, even those from tick bite wounds, and other potential entry points such as mucous membranes. Each female can lay about 200 eggs. The eggs then hatch into larvae, burrowing into the live tissue as they develop before eventually dropping out of the animal and burrowing into the ground. Once in the ground, the pest goes into the pupal stage of its life cycle before again emerging as a fly.

"Screwworm maggots feed exclusively on live tissue, making it especially devastating. Left untreated, infestations can become debilitating, and if the larvae reach vital organs, they can be fatal," says Dr. Thach Winslow, beef cattle technical consultant for Elanco Animal Health.

There are two ways the New World screwworm moves geographically - through natural migration and through the movement in livestock and other animal hosts.

"If the screwworm has a host source available, it is satisfied to stay in a local area where it can infect live animals. But if that becomes less available, the screwworm will travel 10 to 12 miles to find an adequate host to lay its eggs," Winslow says. "The more rapid movement from Central America into Mexico has been the direct result of those larvae taking a ride with cattle and other livestock."

Prioritizing wound care

Should New World screwworm reach the U.S., wound management and pest control are ranchers' first methods of defense. We're working with our customers to help prevent or mitigate the threat.

"We need to be diligent in caring for wounds related to castration, branding, and dehorning. We need to focus on newborn calf checks, because the navel cord can be an entry point for this pest," Winslow says.

Good tick and fly control is also crucial to reducing the bite wounds that could serve as entry points for screwworm.

The importance of surveillance

This evolving threat highlights the need for on-farm vigilance and individual producer action alongside government oversight and recommended responses.

"Be mindful and monitor herds," Winslow says.

When surveilling for potential New World screwworm populations, Winslow notes that producers should be aware of the secondary screwworm, a lookalike pest.

“It’s the same genus, but a different species, and it looks very similar to the screwworm and is present in the United States. However, it feeds on nothing but dead tissue. In comparison, the New World screwworm feeds only on live tissue,” he says.

Identify and report

The next important step is early detection.

“Animals that appear off—isolated, lethargic, or disinterested—warrant a closer look,” Winslow says. “Even small wounds from tick or horn fly bites can become entry points.”

When examining the animal, look for wounds with a foul odor—this can signal an infestation.

Screwworm eggs may resemble small white shingles on a wound’s surface. And once eggs hatch, the wound area may appear larger and more visually prominent.

If you suspect a screwworm infestation, contact your veterinarian immediately. You’ll also need to contact your state veterinarian and collect samples, if possible, preserving them in an alcohol-filled container.

“The screwworm larvae (maggots)are both easier to collect and to identify than flies. If the larvae are not found feeding in live animal tissue, they are not screwworms,” Winslow says.

Above all, producers must remain vigilant. Early detection and prompt reporting are essential to stopping the spread of this invasive pest if it were to cross into the United States. Through responsible care, treatment, and collaboration with veterinarians, we can reduce the potential risk to herds and help prevent the New World screwworm from becoming a national problem again.

For updated information about the New World screwworm issue, please monitor the websites and informational bulletins, including those published by USDA, the Texas Animal Health Commission, the Florida Department of Agriculture, Texas ACM AgriLife, and Texas Tech.

Texas hunters can expect a strong white-tailed deer season

By: Shelby Shank, Texas Farm Bureau; August 4, 2025

Texas hunters have reason to be optimistic as they gear up for the 2025 white-tailed deer season.
According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), healthy deer populations, strong fawn survival rates and an increasing number of mature bucks are contributing to this year's outlook that is expected to be average to above average across the state.

"The saying 'everything is bigger in Texas' can certainly apply to Texas deer hunters and its deer population," said Blaise Korzekwa, TPWD white-tailed deer program leader. "Even an average year in Texas is worth hunting."

Texas leads the nation in the number of deer hunters, total harvest and overall white-tailed deer population.
Last season, hunters had a 67% success rate, harvesting about 837,000 deer, with 51% being bucks and 49% does, according to TPWD. Similar numbers are expected this fall, with increasing doe populations offering even more opportunity.

Hill Country
The Hill Country continues to have the highest population density in the state.

Despite severe flooding in early July, TPWD biologists believe most deer were able to escape to higher ground, and overall impacts on the deer population should be minimal.

However, recent rains came too late to drastically boost antler growth, but mild summer temperatures and improved vegetation in a prolonged drought will likely support strong fawn survival.

Hunters focusing on areas like Llano and Mason counties, where deer densities are highest, should expect to encounter a healthy number of bucks in the 4½ to 5½-year-old range.

South Texas
South Texas is known as the premier big buck destination in the state and has an estimated population of 527,000 white-tailed deer.

While most of the region remains under severe or extreme drought, some areas received timely rainfall in the spring that could potentially boost antler development and overall herd health.

Properties managed for older age-class bucks are expected to benefit the most. Last season, 56% of the buck harvest in the region was made up of deer 4½ years or older. Hunters targeting South Texas ranches may see some of the best mature buck opportunities in the state again this year.

Post Oak region
The Post Oak region is also showing signs of a productive season ahead.

The northern part of the region received beneficial spring rainfall, which should help with fawn recruitment and overall deer health.

In 2024, 42% of harvest bucks in the region were 4½ years or older, setting a record for the area.

Although drought conditions persisted in the southern portion of the region, mature buck sightings and harvest opportunities are still expected to be solid, particularly for deer at least 4½ years old.

East Texas
In East Texas, the population has remained stable at around 327,000 deer for the last four years.

Overall densities can be modest in some parts of this forested region, but habitat-managed properties often see much higher concentrations.

The highest numbers remain near Tyler, and local areas that practice sound deer management can exceed 40 to 50 deer per 1,000 acres.

In 2024, 29% of harvested bucks were 4½ years old or older and also set a record for this region.
TPWD advises hunters to be selective this year, as the middle-aged bucks are thinner and will be important to future mature harvests.

Cross Timbers region
The Cross Timbers region boasts the second-largest deer population in Texas at nearly 788,000 deer.
Poor fawn recruitment in 2022 has led to reduced numbers of younger bucks available this season, but mature buck numbers remain strong.

The age structure is well-distributed, and with timely spring rains, harvest success is expected to mirror last years 69% success rate, according to TPWD.

Rolling Plains
Both the eastern and western Rolling Plains have experienced steady deer population growth in recent years.

Densities range from 18 to 92 deer per 1,000 acres, depending on the location.
Sporadic fawn production has created some gaps in age classes, but mature bucks remain a bright spot.

In the western portion, over 52% of bucks harvested last year were at least 4½ years old, placing the region just behind South Texas for mature buck harvest.

TPWD noted lower hunting pressure, large property sizes and increased interest in wildlife management have helped mature bucks thrive.

Harvest success in both regions hovered around 70% in 2024, and similar outcomes are expected this season.

Reminders for hunters
TPWD reminds hunters to review current regulations before heading to the field.
Hunters are encouraged to check the Outdoor Annual or OutdoorAnnual.com for full deer hunting regulations, information on chronic wasting disease zones and mandatory harvest reporting.

The archery-only season in most counties begins Sept. 27 and runs through Oct. 31.
General season opens Nov. 1 and runs through Jan. 4 in the North Zone and Jan. 18 in the South Zone.

The Rise and Fall – And Rise Again – Of White-Tailed Deer

White-tailed deer have been hunted from the earliest migrations of people into North America, over 15,000 years ago

By: Morning AG Clips; May 29, 2025

Given their abundance in American backyards, gardens and highway corridors these days, it may be surprising to learn that white-tailed deer were nearly extinct about a century ago. While they currently number somewhere in the range of **30 million to 35 million**, at the turn of the 20th century, there were as few as 300,000 whitetails across the entire continent: just 1% of the current population.

This near-disappearance of deer was much discussed at the time. In 1854, Henry David Thoreau had written that no deer had been hunted near Concord, Massachusetts, for a generation. In his famous "Walden," he reported that:

"One man still preserves the horns of the last deer that was killed in this vicinity, and another has told me the particulars of the hunt in which his uncle was engaged. The hunters were formerly a numerous and merry crew here."

But what happened to white-tailed deer? What drove them nearly to extinction, and then what brought them back from the brink?

As a historical ecologist and environmental archaeologist, I have made it my job to answer these questions. Over the past decade, I've studied white-tailed deer bones from archaeological sites across the eastern United States, as well as historical records and ecological data, to help piece together the story of this species.

Precolonial rise of deer populations

White-tailed deer have been hunted from the earliest migrations of people into North America, over 15,000 years ago. The species was far from the most important food resource at that time, though.

Archaeological evidence suggests that white-tailed deer abundance only began to increase after the extinction of megafauna species like mammoths and mastodons opened up ecological niches for deer to fill. Deer bones become very common in archaeological sites from about 6,000 years ago onward, reflecting the economic and cultural importance of the species for Indigenous peoples.

Despite being so frequently hunted, deer populations do not seem to have appreciably declined due to Indigenous hunting prior to AD 1600. Unlike elk or sturgeon, whose numbers were reduced by Indigenous hunters and fishers, white-tailed deer seem to have been resilient to human predation. While archaeologists have found some evidence for human-caused declines in certain parts of North America, other cases are more ambiguous, and deer certainly remained abundant throughout the past several millennia.

Human use of fire could partly explain why white-tailed deer may have been resilient to hunting. Indigenous peoples across North America have long used controlled burning to promote ecosystem health, disturbing old vegetation to promote new growth. Deer love this sort of successional vegetation for food and cover, and thus thrive in previously burned habitats. Indigenous people may have therefore facilitated deer population growth, counteracting any harmful hunting pressure.

More research is needed, but even though some hunting pressure is evident, the general picture from the precolonial era is that deer seem to have been doing just fine for thousands of years. Ecologists estimate that there were roughly 30 million white-tailed deer in North America on the eve of European colonization – about the same number as today.

Colonial-era fall of deer numbers

To better understand how deer populations changed in the colonial era, I recently analyzed deer bones from two archaeological sites in what is now Connecticut. My analysis suggests that hunting pressure on white-tailed deer increased almost as soon as European colonists arrived.

At one site dated to the 11th to 14th centuries – before European colonization – I found that only about 7% to 10% of the deer killed were juveniles.

Hunters generally don't take juvenile deer if they're frequently encountering adults, since adult deer tend to be larger, offering more meat and bigger hides. Additionally, hunting increases mortality on a deer herd but doesn't directly affect fertility, so deer populations experiencing hunting pressure end up with juvenile-skewed age structures. For these reasons, this low percentage of juvenile deer prior to European colonization indicates minimal hunting pressure on local herds.

However, at a nearby site occupied during the 17th century – just after European colonization – between 22% and 31% of the deer hunted were juveniles, suggesting a substantial increase in hunting pressure.

This elevated hunting pressure likely resulted from the transformation of deer into a commodity for the first time. Venison, antlers and deerskins may have long been exchanged within Indigenous trade networks, but things changed drastically in the 17th century. European colonists integrated North America into a trans-Atlantic mercantile capitalist economic system with no precedent in Indigenous society. This applied new pressures to the continent's natural resources.

Deer – particularly their skins – were commodified and sold in markets in the colonies initially and, by the 18th century, in Europe as well. Deer were now being exploited by traders, merchants and manufacturers desiring profit, not simply hunters desiring meat or leather. It was the resulting hunting pressure that drove the species toward its extinction.

20th-century rebound of white-tailed deer

Thanks to the rise of the conservation movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, white-tailed deer survived their brush with extinction.

Concerned citizens and outdoorsmen feared for the fate of deer and other wildlife, and pushed for new legislative protections. The Lacey Act of 1900, for example, banned interstate transport of poached game and – in combination with state-level protections – helped end commercial deer hunting by effectively de-commodifying the species. Aided by conservation-oriented hunting practices and reintroductions of deer from surviving populations to areas where they had been extirpated, white-tailed deer rebounded.

The story of white-tailed deer underscores an important fact: Humans are not inherently damaging to the environment. Hunting from the 17th through 19th centuries threatened the existence of white-tailed deer, but precolonial Indigenous hunting and environmental management appear to have been relatively sustainable, and modern regulatory governance in the 20th century forestalled and reversed their looming extinction.

3 Livestock Skin Concerns to Watch for This Summer

Sun, heat and moisture can harm animals' skin, but early care helps to keep livestock healthy

By: Morning AG Clips; August 7, 2025

Most livestock species have thicker skin than humans, but it's still vulnerable to harsh summer conditions. Sun exposure, bacterial infections and increased activity of parasite-carrying insects can all take a toll on livestock skin.

Each year, the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory, TVMDL, receives samples that reveal how sweltering summers affect livestock health. It's essential to act promptly to prevent skin irritation from becoming painful and causing serious harm.

Effective diagnostic testing, paired with veterinary care, can help guide treatment and protect both animals and producers' livelihoods.

Erin Edwards, DVM, MS, DACVP, veterinary pathologist at TVMDL, explains three common summer skin conditions to watch for in warm weather.

Photosensitization: Severe sunburn caused by toxic plants

Just like humans, animals can experience a fiery reaction to summer rays.

"Effects of photosensitization are like a really severe sunburn," Edwards said. "Livestock owners might see signs of redness, swelling and ulceration. Usually, the skin will start sloughing off, and it's very uncomfortable for the animals."

Primary photosensitization occurs when livestock become overly sensitive to sunlight after eating toxic plants containing the photosensitizing agent, phylloerythrin. The harmful compounds are concentrated in the skin, making it more susceptible to the sun's rays.

"Burns are usually found on areas with less hair or pigmentation, like the nose or around the eyes," Edwards said. "Lighter colored animals in general are usually more susceptible to burns."

Secondary or hepatogenous photosensitization is the most common form of skin disorder. The prefix "hepato" comes from the Greek word "hepar," meaning "liver."

This form of photosensitization is caused by liver damage. Liver damage may result from a range of conditions, one of which is the consumption of toxic plants. When the liver fails to break down and eliminate substances like phylloerythrin, they begin to build up in the blood, increasing photosensitivity and causing the skin to react severely to sunlight.

In severe cases of photosensitization, skin, ear, lip and udder tissues may die and peel away. And secondary bacterial infections often occur after skin sloughing, leading to additional health concerns and delayed healing. Furthermore, if livestock continue to consume toxic plants, liver damage could worsen and lead to death.

What to do if livestock show signs of sunburn or peeling:

- Move affected animals to shade immediately.
- Contact a veterinarian for diagnosis and care.
- Remove liver-damaging and phototoxic plants such as Bishop's weed and Largeleaf lantana from pastures.

To learn how to identify harmful plants, read Toxic Plants of Texas, written by veterinary and toxicology experts from The Texas A&M University System.

Rain rot: Crusty skin infections after wet weather

Rain rot, a disease caused by the bacterium Dermatophilus congolensis, is a skin infection that typically develops when pasture animals spend long hours in rainy conditions. Prolonged moisture softens the skin, allowing bacteria to enter — even without visible wounds.

Rain rot may appear to be a minor skin irritation at first, but it can quickly worsen without proper care.

Rain rot signs include:

- Crusty, matted hair and patchy hair loss, typically starting on animals' backs or around their feet.
- Sores along the back or lower legs.
- Raw, pink or bleeding skin in severe cases.

A lack of veterinary attention could lead to secondary infections that extend into the bloodstream or organs. Consult your veterinarian to speed up healing, ease discomfort and even prevent death.

Summer sores: Fly-transmitted wounds that won't heal

Summer sores, or *c*utaneous habronemiasis, are open wounds that won't heal. They're caused by parasitic worms transmitted by flies — especially as fly activity increases during the summer. An immature habronema worm enters the body through the bite of a fly, specifically, by a housefly or stable fly.

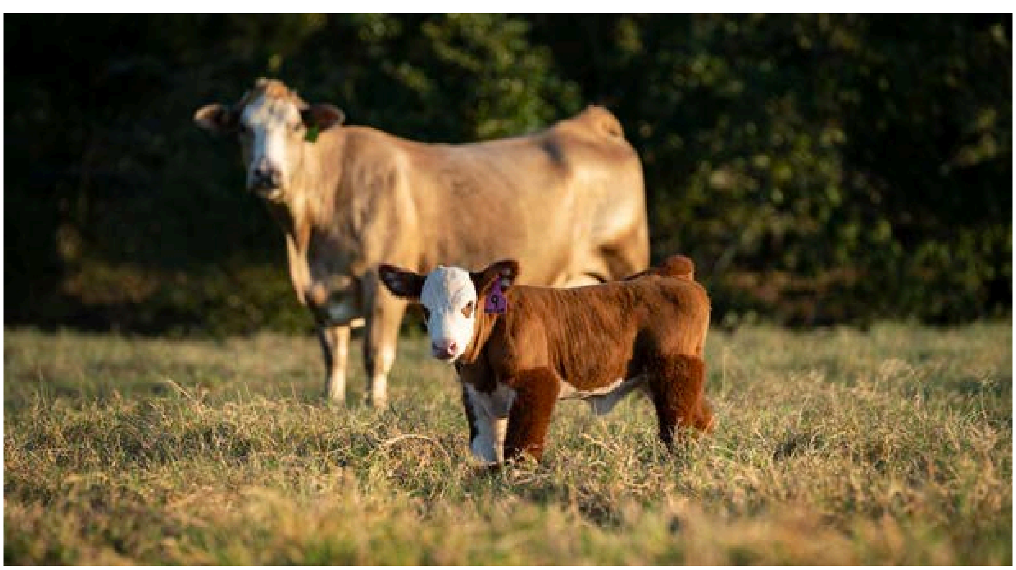
Horses, donkeys and mules are most at risk, but other livestock can be affected.

Signs of summer sores include:

- Red, round wounds that won't heal.
- Sores near eyes, lips or existing wounds.
- Inflammation and intense itching, caused by the worm burrowing inside the skin.

"The flies are attracted to areas where there's moisture," Edwards said. "They bite around the eyes, lips and especially where there are wounds or damaged skin."

To protect livestock, owners should consider fly control in barns and pastures. They should also consult their veterinarian as soon as signs are spotted because summer sores don't heal on their own. Without proper treatment, sores may become larger and more painful, usually leading to reduced mobility and a decline in overall health.



What does summer pneumonia look like in calves, and what to do about it?

Even in the “quiet” season, cow-calf producers must stay alert to this common and costly pasture health threat.

By: BEEF Magazine; August 11, 2025

Summertime for cow-calf producers is usually a low stress period of the year. With calving season behind us and cattle out to summer pastures, it’s easy to hit cruise control and take a breather before we start to think about fall work and weaning season.

While this can provide a much-needed break, don’t forget that there is the potential for lurking problems in pasture if we don’t remain vigilant about monitoring cattle health. One of the most common health issues that producers face is summer pneumonia in suckling calves.

Summer Pneumonia in the Herd

A survey of veterinarians led by AR Woolums suggested that across the plains states, about one in five herds will have cases of summer pneumonia in a given year. In a related survey of beef producers by the same research group, the number of cases of summer pneumonia appeared to correlate with:

- herds that had fought scours in the calves,
- had a calving season that lasted three months or longer, or
- that brought in orphan calves from other farms.

In his 2015 Beefwatch article, Summer Pneumonia in Beef Calves, Dr. Richard Randall discussed a case-control study also conducted by Dr. Woolums and her research group in Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota beef herds to better identify risk factors for nursing calf pneumonia.

Several risk factors were identified, including:

- larger herd size, especially herds with 500 cows or more,
- intensive grazing, and
- estrus (heat) synchronization.

It is thought that these practices increase the number of “effective contacts” between calves, meaning they have more chances to effectively spread bacteria and viruses to one another. These practices may carry significant benefits for the beef operation, but care must be taken to manage the associated risks.

Symptoms of Summer Pneumonia in Calves

Initial signs of pneumonia in suckling calves can be subtle and identifying affected animals is often the biggest challenge in getting them the needed treatment. Some signs to watch for in calves:

- **Depression**- calves that are not as bright and perky as you would expect. Depressed calves may look tired or drowsy, not as interested in interacting with herdmates, or slow to respond to caretakers.
- **Isolation**- Calves that may be battling pneumonia can have a tendency to isolate themselves from the herd, often found lying away from busy communal areas where they can find some quiet resting places.
- **Inappetence** – While difficult to directly assess this symptom, it often manifests as calves that are “hollow" or "shrunk up” with a lack of good abdominal fill. Alternatively, we may observe cows with over-full udders when they are not being nursed as regularly or robustly.
- **Cough**- While commonly considered a symptom of respiratory disease, a cough is **not** nearly as reliable as one would think. So while it is a good symptom to look for, make sure that it is not the primary indicator being used to evaluate calves for illness.
- **Nasal/Ocular Discharge**- much like a cough, nasal and/or ocular discharge can be a good indication of pneumonia, but the absence of this symptom should never be viewed as a reason not to consider pneumonia in a calf.
- **Fever, Increased Respiratory Rate and Difficulty Breathing**- once you identify a potential pneumonia victim, you are likely to observe these more overt symptoms during handling for treatment. It is always a good idea to carry a thermometer and get a rectal temperature on calves that are caught as the presence of a fever is generally one of the most reliable indicators of pneumonia in young calves.

Contact Your Veterinarian

Once a producer has identified pneumonia cases in their herd, a conversation with their herd health veterinarian is the next important step. Your veterinarian can help you make decisions on the most effective plan for treatment, as well as discuss prevention options.

Early identification of affected calves is important, as treatment is usually effective when administered early in the course of illness, but can become much less successful if the disease is allowed to progress.

If a calf suspected of having pneumonia dies, your veterinarian can generally diagnose this condition with a high level of certainty during a **post-mortem exam**.

- Having these calves posted by a veterinarian can also rule out other possible causes of death and allow the vet to recommend the ideal course of action for future cases.
- During the summer months, it is very important to get any dead calf that will be presented for a post-mortem exam to the veterinarian as soon as possible, because the carcass will decompose rapidly in hot conditions, which may make it impossible for a vet to accurately diagnose.

Prevention

As with any herd health issue, prevention is generally more useful than treatment, so what can producers do to avoid pneumonia issues on summer pasture?

- **Appropriate Vaccination Programs** – While no vaccination program is 100% effective, having a good vaccination program that is well administered can help decrease disease incidence. Also important is how vaccinations are administered and handled during working events; vaccination is only effective if vaccines do not get damaged by heat, sunlight, or contamination prior to administration.
- **Good Colostrum Management** – like it or not, much of what makes our calves successful happens in the first 24 hours after birth; assuring cows have the tools to build adequate quality colostrum, and being diligent in making sure every calf receives adequate colostrum can greatly affect its susceptibility to disease for the rest of its life. It is important to understand that the immune support a calf receives from mom in the form of colostral antibodies wanes in mid to late summer, making this a critical window when calves can be more susceptible to disease, which is where that vaccination derived immunity will be critical.
- **Mineral Supplementation-** recent research shows that calves consume more minerals than what most producers expect on summer pasture, even at very young ages. Both Macro and Trace minerals are critical in immune function and vaccine responses; having both cows that are adequate in mineral status and calves that are able to consume the minerals that they need when maternal derived supplies run out is critical for both adequate response to vaccination and resilience to disease exposure.
- **Attention to Energy and Protein Nutrition-** Both energy and protein intake are critical to support and maintain immune function and disease resilience, it's important to understand that young calves are not as efficient ruminants as the cows, and as pasture quality decreases in late summer/early fall extra attention may need to be given to making sure calves are getting what they need nutritionally to maintain health.

An Old Parasite Makes a New Comeback Through North America

By: Clayton Johnson, PORK; August 14, 2025

There are animal diseases for which pig producers have long been on alert and prepared to fight should they come across U.S. borders. One they might not have thought about in decades, or ever — depending on their age — is New World screwworm (NWS), or Cochliomyia hominivorax.

Unfortunately, it's time to start learning about it again. Last November, Mexico reported NWS had been found inside its southern border, and in May the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) suspended imports of live cattle, horses and bison from Mexico. Recent reports have placed NWS as close as 370 miles to the U.S. border, and at this point it seems less "if" and more "when" NWS is in our country again.

So, what is this screwworm?

Gone for Decades

Native to the Western Hemisphere, the adult NWS is a parasitic fly that lays its eggs in the wounds or orifices of warm-blooded animals — cattle, pigs, pets, even humans (though rarely). It gets its name from the larval maggot, which feeds on the host by screwing itself into flesh. NWS used to be a common worry for livestock producers here, until the USDA and Southern states funded scientific research to mostly drive it outside U.S. borders about 60 years ago.

Between 1962 and 1975 alone, the U.S. and Mexico partnered to release more than 94 billion NWS flies rendered infertile through Sterile Insect Technique lab radiation. The treated males mated with non-treated females in the wild, resulting in population reduction, and by 1986 NWS was effectively driven south of Mexico as well.

In 1994 APHIS and Panama began collaborating to maintain a biological barrier near the Colombian border, which is a narrow land "pinchpoint" relatively easy and affordable to "blanket" with sterile males each year — and the flies have a difficult time crossing that much ocean from elsewhere in South America. During Covid, funding for improving/maintaining the Panama flies factory paused, and fertile NWS flies were back in Central America again by 2023.

In the 1970s, despite a Mexico-U.S. barrier zone, livestock producers in Southwest states still struggled with some infestations and economic losses. In 1976 Texas reported 1.5 million cattle and 333,000 sheep and goats infested with NWS. Adjusted for inflation, APHIS says this infestation now would cost the producers $732 million and result in a loss of $1.8 billion to the state's economy.

Trade Disruptions

Beyond those APHIS numbers, I don't have a detailed assessment of the potential market impact of NWS landing in our swine barns. If NWS is identified in the U.S., it's likely there would be immediate trade restrictions imposed by at least some of our export partners until we demonstrate the country, or at least areas of it, are NWS-free. Although we don't export many live pigs, and meat and other post-slaughter products are free of NWS, officials in other countries will likely not want to take any chances — particularly Japan, China, and Korea, which don't have NWS.

How we've responded to the NWS in Mexico can tell us a lot about how other countries would likely react to us if and when we find ourselves in Mexico's position. On top of that, there's the reality that more than a few countries probably wouldn't hesitate to take the chance to retaliate against this year's broad U.S. tariffs.

I can note that southern producers should probably be more immediately worried and on the lookout for NWS because they are closer to Mexico and because the NWS thrives better in their climates than further north. However, this doesn't mean Minnesota producers, for instance, are immune or shouldn't also take steps to be certain their biosecurity measures are sound.

Another reason to worry more about possible NWS impact in the South is that the highest concentration of feral swine is in the Southeast (and California), creeping into the lower Midwest. Although most commercial pigs are indoors, in the South there are some raised in a transition barn environment, plus small-scale and show pigs that live outdoors, which could be exposed to nearby wild swine and other potential NWS carriers.

Be Proactive in Programs

I advise any pork producer not already participating in the Swine Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) or Secure Pork Supply Plan (SPSP) to enroll. These are federal-state-industry programs designed to increase confidence among U.S. trading partners in the safety and biosecurity of our swine production.

They provide producers information and assistance with preparing for potential disease, and maintaining business continuity if they do experience an outbreak. As a producer, you can't personally control how far north the NWS advances, but you can protect your own operations and interests as much as possible.

Other biosecurity measures I recommend at this time are monitoring and education. Know which pigs have open wounds and monitor if they are not healing. Do the same for sows that have recently given birth, young pigs with recently notched ears or docked tails, and vulnerable young piglets generally most susceptible to illness.

Also watch for:

- NWS flies are similar in size to house flies, with orange eyes, metallic blue-green body and 3 dark stripes on their back
- Be aware of these in wounds or other orifices: visible egg masses or maggots, bloody or purulent discharge, odor of decay or wounds that enlarge or deepen
- Behavioral signs of possible infection: head shaking, rubbing against surfaces to scratch or signs of pain like depression, irritability, inappetence or isolating

If you do suspect NWS, contact your vet immediately. If they believe it's NWS, they will notify your state's top animal health official and the APHIS veterinarian in charge, as well as collect samples for the National Veterinary Services Laboratories. The animal(s) will need to be quarantined until free of NWS and affected premises cleaned with approved larvacidal insecticide, then monitored weekly for a month after quarantine.

USDA Spending to Prepare

CBS News recently reported the USDA expects a new sterile flies factory to be up and running in southern Mexico this time next year. It is also planning to open a distribution center in southern Texas by the end of 2025 to import and distribute flies from Panama if necessary. The USDA wants the Mexican factory in place, according to CBS, because Panama can only breed up to 117 million flies a week and USDA wants capacity for at least 400 million.

Based on various news reports and veterinary warnings, it's safe to presume NWS will show up either much closer to our border or in the country at some point. Without fearmongering, I do want producers to be as prepared as possible just in case.

Low herd inventory ripples through U.S. beef market

By: Adam Russell, AgriLife Today; August 5, 2025

Constrained cattle supplies and strong beef demand continue to fuel record prices at all levels of the U.S. beef market – from sale barns to grocery aisles, said Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service experts.

Jason Cleere, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension statewide beef cattle specialist in the Texas A&M Department of Animal Science, Bryan-College Station, said cow/calf producers are realizing strong calf sale prices as a result of strong consumer demand for beef and low cattle supplies.

The national cattle herd continues to hover at historically low numbers following bouts of drought across major beef-producing states, including back-to-back years of extreme drought across Texas.

The national beef herd hit a 73-year low in January 2024 at 28.2 million head. Beef herd numbers have increased slightly to 28.7 million head, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture July cattle inventory report, but cow-calf prices continue to reach new heights.

Cleere said feeding cattle to heavier weights has helped make up for lower cattle numbers, but beef production is down year-over-year overall. Cleere said the herd size coupled with strong consumer demand at the retail level has continued to fuel historically high prices for cow-calf producers.

"Retail prices are high, but there is still strong consumer demand," Cleere said. "On the other end of production, you have ranchers capitalizing on record calf prices and asking, 'How long are these high calf prices going to last?'"

Cow/calf biology weigh on U.S. beef market

David Anderson, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension economist in the Texas A&M Department of Agricultural Economics, Bryan-College Station, said low herd numbers and fewer market-ready calves are fueling record high prices at all levels of the beef market.

"We've got record high calf prices and record high fed cattle prices, and that is fueling record high beef prices on the wholesale and retail side," he said. "Beef supplies have been particularly low since April while the demand from meatpackers and ultimately consumers has been strong."

Nationally, Anderson said 300-400-pound calves were averaging $4.67 per pound while 500-600-pound calves were bringing $4.17 per pound on average. Localized sale prices have been even higher.

A weekly price-trend report by Jason Banta, Ph.D., AgriLife Extension beef cattle specialist, Overton, shows the average high price reported by six Central and East Texas auctions was $5.25 per pound for 300-400-pound calves and $4.70 per pound for 500-600-pound calves.

Anderson said the present market is also a good snapshot of how beef production cycle dynamics can influence supply and ultimately prices throughout the year.

Springtime is calving time for most cattle operations, he said. Those spring-born calves will go to auction in the fall. That influx of supply tends to create a price low point for the year whereas fall- and winter-born calves are hitting the market through spring and summer.

"It's the biology of when calves are born and how fast they grow," he said. "A decent number to go by from birth to finishing weight is 18-20 months, and that cycle can ripple through the sale barns all the way to the grocery store."

Margins improve for Texas ranchers
The USDA Economic Research Service estimated the value of U.S. beef cattle and calf production at more than $83 billion in 2024. Record calf prices have been "tremendous" for Texas cattle producers who endured years of drought and high input costs, Anderson said.

Cleere said margins for cow/calf producers have improved as grazing around the state improved and input costs fell some. Ranchers are holding back replacement heifers, but better margins continue to incentivize selling those future calf-producing cows at rates that do not signal broader growth of the Texas or U.S. herd.

Anderson said individual producers may be utilizing excellent grazing conditions to keep or buy heifers to capitalize in the future, but most are seeing profitability now and taking it.

Both Anderson and Cleere expect calf prices to continue trending upward in 2026. Their upward price trajectory could steepen if more producers begin holding back more heifers for future calf production.

"Holding back heifers would really reduce the supply of calves for sale, and that usually drives prices even higher," Anderson said. "You can't discount the effect of rain and the good grazing conditions, which can lead to higher prices too, especially at local levels. But even with all that good grass, the incentive to sell is strong with these record high prices."

Ranchers should plan for best and worst
With no signs of a herd rebuild, Cleere recommends cow/calf producers find efficiencies where they can optimize profitability while prices are high. Reproductive efficiency, nutrition and herd health practices, forage management and operational improvements that reduce long-term costs can all factor into increased productivity.

Preparing for best- and worst-case scenarios can give producers the ability to adjust their strategies, he said.
"It's easy to make a profit right now," he said. "But that is going to change, and we know eventually times will get leaner."
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AgriLife Extension district reporters compiled the following summaries:
Coastal Bend
Hot, dry weather continued, and soil moisture was low. Corn and sorghum harvest were nearly complete. Cotton looks good overall, and harvest should begin soon. Rice harvest continued with fair to good yields. Hay harvest was ongoing, with decent yields despite the heat. Some producers were just completing first cuttings due to earlier weather delays. Range and pasture conditions were declining. Livestock remained in good condition, but ongoing dry conditions may soon require changes to herd management. Some mealybugs in hayfields and pastures were repo

South
Extreme heat and wind greatly reduced environmental moisture, but creeks and rivers maintained water levels. Despite some producers reporting up to 0.5 inch of rain, topsoil and subsoil conditions remained very dry. Vegetable crops have slowed but were still producing. Soil was being prepped for strawberries. Corn and grain sorghum harvest continued. Cotton defoliation has started in earlier-planted fields, and harvest was expected soon. Late-planted grains needed a few more weeks until harvest. The pecan crop looks good for now. Peanut crops were growing under irrigation. Hay producers continued to irrigate and roll up bales when possible. Increasing temperatures were expected to dry out pastures and caused declining conditions. Livestock were in good condition, and producers were providing minimal supplements. Feed prices remain high, and producers were expected to thin out herds as triple-digit temperatures approach. Wildlife were in good condition.

Southwest
While scattered showers brought some areas over 2 inches of rain, hot and mostly dry conditions caused an overall reduction in soil moisture. Hay, corn and milo harvest continued with below-average yields reported for corn and milo. Pecans were advancing in nut development, with some pecan scab reported. The hot, dry conditions were stressing pastures and turfgrass, causing an increase in fungal infections and insect pest pressure. Rangelands were drying out. Livestock and wildlife remained in good condition.

NUECES COUNTY
710 E. MAIN ST., STE. 1
ROBSTOWN, TX 78380

Jaime Lopez

Jaime R. Lopez, CEA
Agriculture/Natural Resources
710 E. Main St., Suite 1
Robstown, TX 78380
Ph: 361.767.5223
Fax: 361.767.5248
Email: jaime.lopez@ag.tamu.edu

Visit Us Online:

www.Nueces.AgriLife.org

TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION SERVICE
710 E. MAIN, SUITE 1
ROBSTOWN, TEXAS 78380
361.767.5223