

Screw-worm fly

AQIS fact sheet

SCREW-WORM FLY

Screw-worm fly is the name given to two species of blowfly, commonly referred to as old world and new world. These insects lay their eggs in, or 'strike', wounds on animals. Screw-worm fly exists in low numbers and is rarely seen, unlike normal blowflies. Neither species have been recorded in this country, though the old world species exists in Papua New Guinea, only a short distance from the northern tip of Australia.

WHAT IS THE RISK?

This fly has not become established on the Australian mainland, primarily because:

- the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) has maintained close monitoring of high risk vessels;
- screw-worm flies do not normally fly across open water;
- south-east winds throughout most of the year reduce the fly's ability to travel south; and
- northern Australia's population of suitable livestock, feral and native animals are relatively sparse.

However, eggs or larvae could cross the Torres Strait should people smuggle animals from Papua New Guinea.

There is a threat of transporting screw-worm fly on insufficiently disinfected livestock vessels.

Maggots in wounds on people arriving in Australia are a potential pathway for the entry of screw-worm fly.

If screw-worm fly becomes established in northern Australia's pastoral areas an outbreak could cost our livestock industries up to \$500 million a year in control, stock losses and lost export revenue.

THE THREAT

Even if you have no livestock on-board, screw-worm can be a threat. The female screw-worm fly lays up to 250 eggs in the edge of a wound – anything from a minor scratch or a puncture such as a tick bite to a branding, dehorning or castration wound.

The eggs hatch within 24 hours and develop into maggots (larvae), which burrow their way into healthy flesh below the wound to feed on blood.

All warm blooded animals – including humans – are susceptible to attack by screw-worm fly. Cattle, horses, and sheep are prime targets. However, deer, goats, cats, donkeys, buffalo, pigs, fowl, native animals and zoo animals are all susceptible.

AQIS REQUIREMENTS – WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- declare that 'livestock has been carried' on your Quarantine Pre-Arrival Report for Vessels (Pratique) form when entering Australia,
- refer to Masters Information Sheet for correct cleansing, disinfection of vessels, as required by AQIS.