



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 29, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
800 9th St. SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Secretary Rollins,

We write to you today regarding the threat of New World Screwworm (NWS) and the establishment of a new sterile fly production facility located within the southern United States. As you know, NWS has been moving north for the past two years, and in November 2024, it entered Mexico's borders. We commend you for taking swift action to suspend importations of cattle, horses, and bison from Mexico in May and again in July. We also commend your investments to retrofit an existing fruit fly facility in Metapa, Mexico, into an operational sterile NWS fly production facility, and build a domestic dispersal facility at Moore Air Base in South Texas to prevent further movement.

Until its eradication in the United States in the 1960s, NWS caused devastating impacts to American livestock and other mammals. Eradication efforts pushed NWS down to Panama's border, where the United States has worked since to maintain the barrier under the United States Commission for the Eradication and Prevention of Screwworm (COPEG). Eradication has yielded an estimated \$796 million per year in producer benefits and \$2.8 billion per year in general economic benefits for the United States.¹

Even with the department's strong response measures thus far to prevent further northward spread, we must continue to explore and take all necessary additional actions. As happened before, a domestic outbreak of NWS in the United States would have serious health and economic impacts in the agricultural sector throughout the country. For instance, prior to eradication in the 1960s, NWS cost the livestock industry more than a \$100 million annually.

¹ [NWS Economic Impact Report](#)

In Arkansas, cattle are a significant part of the agricultural industry. Arkansas has over 1.5 million cattle, which contribute nearly \$500 million to Arkansas' economy each year. Most cattle herd sizes in Arkansas average 35 head, with an average farm size of less than 50. Any impacts to the rancher and cattle industry would also trickle down to row crop farmers who are growing feed and hay. As such, any biohazard impact on cattle will have a significant bearing in Arkansas.

We know you and your team are working as fast as possible to bring the new sterile fly production facility in Mexico and new domestic dispersal facility online. The additional capacity that will be unlocked by these facilities are urgently needed to prevent reentry of NWS into the United States. We also know additional domestic production capacity may be needed to adequately safeguard and protect American livestock and other wildlife, especially if there are any disruptions to the facilities in Panama or Mexico. We ask that you continue to give full consideration to the construction of a new sterile fly production facility in the United States, which we were happy to see was noted in the United States Department of Agriculture's recently published *Five-Pronged Plan to Address New World Screwworm*.

Additionally, given such facilities use nuclear radiation to sterilize screwworms, any new production facility would need to undergo an extensive regulatory review process from the necessary agencies. Should the Administration move forward with a new production facility, we trust you will ensure a robust yet expedited regulatory review and deploy skilled personnel to ensure continuous and efficient operations. We appreciate your strong focus on exploring and implementing all the available tools to eradicate this devastating pest, and are confident in your continued leadership for American agriculture. While NWS poses a significant threat nationwide, once again, this issue is of importance to Arkansas, and specifically, smaller-sized farms.

Thank you again for your efforts taken thus far to protect Arkansas and American agriculture, and for your attention to this important issue. We look forward to working and engaging with you and your staff on this issue.

Sincerely,



French Hill
Member of Congress



Eric A. "Rick" Crawford
Member of Congress



Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress



Steve Womack
Member of Congress