

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 18, 2026

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins,

As Members of Congress representing Texas, we write to request a briefing regarding the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) plan to address the resurgence of New World screwworm in the State of Texas and across the United States.

As you know, Texas is home to the largest cattle population in the country and leads the United States in domestic beef production. Texas also leads the country in pork, sheep, goat, and horse production. The threat of New World screwworm disproportionately impacts our constituents and their livelihoods. As their representatives in Congress, we request further information on the USDA's ongoing coordination efforts with our state and local leaders, Texas stakeholders, and industry partners to contain and eradicate New World screwworm.

Since the initial case of New World screwworm was discovered in a three-week-old calf in Zavala County, Texas, additional cases have emerged in Texas and New Mexico. An outbreak of screwworm today could cost Texas livestock producers \$732 million per year, with an annual economic loss of \$1.8 billion for Texas alone. Yet the responsibility of identifying, reporting, and treating new screwworm infestations falls largely upon the shoulders of farmers and ranchers who are already facing high input costs, tight credit, weather extremes, rising fuel and fertilizer prices, and a record 75-year-low U.S. cattle herd.

For the past several decades, our country has remained relatively pest-free thanks to the dedicated work of federal staff and experts at the USDA and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) tasked with addressing infectious pests and diseases. We understand, however, that last year, the department terminated the employment of more than 15,000 USDA employees—roughly 15 percent of the department's workforce, including more than 1,300 staff at APHIS—and, at the same time, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) eliminated more than 5,300 foreign assistance grants and programs, including a program dedicated to monitoring and containing New World screwworm migration in Central America.

For years, federal experts have raised the need to disperse 700 million sterile screwworm flies each week to properly contain and eradicate the New World screwworm outbreak. It is our understanding that, today, the combined sterile screwworm fly production for the United States, Mexico, and Panama consists of a single facility in Panama producing just 100 million sterile flies per week. It is welcome news that the USDA broke ground last month on the new \$750 million sterile fly production facility in Edinburg, Texas; however, this facility is scheduled to become operational by November 2027—more than 16 months from today.

Despite the historic success of the United States' program to eradicate the screwworm, our ranchers and livestock experts feared it would return. We must make every effort to contain the current outbreak and once again eradicate this pest from the United States. Given the urgency of this matter, we request a briefing for members of Congress on these issues, including the following:

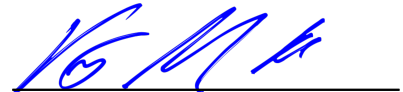
1. What actions the USDA is taking to coordinate with Texas state and local leaders, stakeholders, industry partners, and entomologists to contain and eradicate New World screwworm;
2. What actions the USDA is taking to coordinate with international partners to contain further New World screwworm from crossing our borders and eradicate this pest;
3. What actions the USDA is taking to provide federal resources to ranchers and livestock producers to offset detection and treatment costs and cover potential economic losses from screwworm casualties and herd movement restrictions under quarantine;
4. What impacts these USDA staff reductions at USDA are having on USDA's screwworm detection and response efforts;
5. What plans the USDA has to hire additional staff to address this crisis;
6. What impacts these USDA program eliminations are having on USDA's screwworm detection and response efforts;
7. What actions the USDA is taking to accelerate the production and output of sterile screwworm flies across Texas and the United States, including potential new facilities;
8. What alternative response methods and technologies the USDA is exploring to further contain and eradicate New World screwworm in a swift and efficient manner;
9. When the New World screwworm was first discovered in Zavala County, Texas, why was the quarantine and surveillance zone limited to 20-kilometer radius around the infected livestock; and
10. What actions did the USDA take to change strategy, if any, once the New World screwworm reached 100 miles from our Southern border?


We look forward to discussing how we can work together to protect our farmers and ranchers, our state, and our nation from the threats New World screwworm present to us at this moment and into the future.


To set up the briefing, please have your staff contact Kevin Koo in Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher's office at Kevin.Koo@mail.house.gov or by calling (202) 225-2571.

Sincerely,



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress


Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress


Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress


Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress


Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress


Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress


Al Green
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Julie Johnson

Julie Johnson
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Marc A. Veasey

Marc A. Veasey
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