



PR#148-25

PRESS RELEASE

MoHW Confirms First Human Case of New World Screwworm in Belize

Belmopan, August 18, 2025.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) informs the public that the first confirmed human case of New World Screwworm (NWS) since its re-emergence in Belize in December 2024 has been detected.

The patient, a 21-year-old male from Benque Viejo del Carmen Town in the Cayo District, sought medical attention at the San Ignacio Community Hospital on August 15, 2025. Through ongoing collaboration with the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA), samples were immediately submitted and confirmed. The patient is currently undergoing treatment and is responding well.

The Ministry takes this opportunity to remind residents that the key to preventing New World Screwworm in both animals and humans is proper wound care to avoid contact with the New World Screwworm fly. The highest number of cases in Belize has been reported in dogs; however, the New World Screwworm can affect all warm-blooded animals, including livestock, wildlife, and pets. Frequent inspection of animals under your care is important, and any wound should be promptly and properly treated to prevent transmission.

What is New World Screwworm?

The New World Screwworm (*Cochliomyia hominivorax*) is a parasitic fly that lays its eggs in open wounds of humans and animals. The larvae hatch and feed on living tissue, causing severe pain, tissue damage, and in untreated cases, life-threatening infections. This infestation in humans is known as New World Screwworm myiasis. Because of its ability to spread rapidly and affect both animal and human health, New World Screwworm is considered a serious zoonotic public health and veterinary concern.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness, in partnership with BAHA and other stakeholders, will continue surveillance and public education to reduce the risk of further cases.

Ends

For more information, please contact:

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