

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

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Report Name: Costa Rica Declares Screwworm Emergency

Country: Costa Rica

Post: San Jose

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Policy and Program Announcements, Agriculture in the News, Livestock and Products, Pest/Disease Occurrences

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Report Highlights:

Costa Rica declared the re-emergence of New World screwworm a national emergency on February 7, 2024, nearly 7 months after reporting its first case since the late 1990s. Amid increasing case counts, expanding geographic distribution, and stringent fiscal controls, the emergency declaration should provide Costa Rican animal health authorities access to resources needed to "prevent, control, and eradicate" New World screwworm from Costa Rica. USDA and Costa Rica jointly funded the campaign that successfully eradicated New World screwworm in 2000; USDA suspended Costa Rica's 'free from' status for New World screwworm in August 2023, imposing additional requirements on live animals entering the United States from Costa Rica.

On February 7, Costa Rica's animal health authority SENASA [declared a state of emergency](#) in response to a growing outbreak of [New World screwworm](#) (NWS). Despite the weekly, aerial release of nearly 15 million sterile NWS flies, Costa Rica has not been able to halt the pest's progress, placing not just Costa Rican dairy and beef cattle at increasing risk, but also wild animals, domestic pets, and humans. The February 7 emergency declaration should provide access to additional financial resources SENASA needs to ramp up its campaign to re-eradicate NWS from Costa Rica.

SENASA reported Costa Rica's first NWS case in nearly a quarter century on July 14, 2023, in the [Corredores](#) region of Southwestern Costa Rica near the Panamanian border crossing of [Paso Canoas](#). Through February 7, 2024, SENASA recorded 203 confirmed cases of NWS. Though the vast majority of those NWS cases were confined to the Pacific coastal region by Costa Rica's towering central mountain range, SENASA recorded multiple NWS cases in [Alajuela province](#) as well as its first Atlantic coastal region cases in early 2024.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) officials have provided material support to SENASA's NWS response since July 2023. USDA and Costa Rica collaborated on the original NWS eradication campaign in the 1990s, which was part of a decades-long USDA campaign that succeeded in eradicating NWS from North America in 2001. USDA scientists Dr. Raymond Bushland and Dr. Edward Knipling were awarded the 1992 World Food Prize for developing the sterile insect technique (SIT), which was instrumental to the original eradication effort.

New World screwworm is the larva of the *Cochliomyia hominivorax* fly. Though NWS is commonly associated with cattle, female NWS flies are attracted to and lay their eggs in wounds of any warm-blooded creature, including domestic pets, wild animals, and humans. NWS larvae hatch, feed on tissue around the wound, and can cause fatal complications in healthy animals. Mature larvae detach from the host and pupate in surface layers of soil, before hatching into adult flies; the *Cochliomyia hominivorax* life cycle is approximately 3 weeks long.

Attachments:

No Attachments.