



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

June 23, 2026

The Honorable Scott H. Hutchins, Ph.D.
Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Dr. Hutchins:

Thank you for your response to my request that USDA revisit the successful New World screwworm (NWS) eradication campaigns developed by USDA and successfully implemented in the United States and Mexico during previous outbreaks.

Specifically, I asked USDA to study the integrated strategy that eliminated the New World screwworm from the United States through the combined use of the Screwworm Adult Suppression System (SWASS) and the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT).

SWASS, which is applied prior to SIT, works by attracting and killing adult screwworm flies before they can reproduce. SIT works by flooding the environment with sterile male flies. Together, they formed one of the most successful pest-eradication programs in agricultural history. The lesson is simple: USDA did not eradicate the New World screwworm with sterile flies alone. It eradicated the screwworm with a coordinated strategy that combined sterile flies with adult suppression technologies such as SWASS.

It is from that perspective that I offer the following observations regarding your response and USDA's current strategy for addressing the New World screwworm outbreak.

The Texas Department of Agriculture maintains that the New World screwworm remains the same pest USDA eradicated decades ago. Its biology has not changed. It has not evolved into a more resistant pest. The same screwworm that threatened American agriculture then is threatening it again today.

What worked then can work again.

In your response, you raised concerns regarding pesticide availability and whether current Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulatory frameworks would permit the use of compounds employed during previous eradication efforts. Specifically, you suggested EPA would be unlikely to approve another organophosphate such as dichlorvos (DDVP). Recent experience suggests otherwise.

Since the beginning of the Trump Administration, the Texas Department of Agriculture has requested seven EPA Section 18 Emergency Use Authorizations, four involving organophosphate products. All seven were approved by EPA. Most notably, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)—the very agency leading the federal response to the New World screwworm outbreak—requested and received a Section 18 emergency exemption for coumaphos, an organophosphate, to directly treat screwworm infestations in livestock.

Likewise, information provided by USDA and the Texas Animal Health Commission indicated that dichlorvos (DDVP) was no longer available or in use. My staff found that conclusion to be incorrect.

DDVP has remained readily available in both the United States and Mexico since 1961 and continues to be widely used today in fly-control products. More than forty U.S.-registered products contain dichlorvos and are labeled for the control of flies and maggots. DDVP also remains approved for certain uses in Mexico. Given these existing registrations and approvals, there appears to be no meaningful regulatory barrier preventing EPA or Mexico's regulatory authorities from expediting approval of additional DDVP-based fly-control products to respond to this emergency.

Importantly, multiple studies conducted during and after the original eradication campaigns found no significant adverse effects on livestock, wildlife, or the broader environment resulting from these treatment programs. The historical record demonstrates that these tools were both effective and environmentally responsible when properly deployed.

You also noted that organophosphates can pose risks to human health. However, SWASS pellets are specifically designed to attract and target screwworm flies, not people. Moreover, USDA APHIS and the Texas Animal Health Commission routinely utilize coumaphos—also an organophosphate—as part of the Fever Tick Eradication Program by applying it directly to cattle that ultimately enter the food supply. The federal government has already demonstrated its willingness to employ organophosphates when the threat warrants it.

The facts are straightforward. The screwworm is the same pest it was fifty years ago, and the tools that helped eradicate it remain available today.

By the end of June 2026, USDA will have released nearly eight billion sterile flies into Mexico. Yet approximately 1,950 active screwworm cases remain—the highest number reported since the current outbreak began. Those facts suggest that the current strategy, while well-intentioned, is not producing the results achieved during previous eradication campaigns.

That reality alone warrants a serious reassessment of whether the current strategy is sufficient and whether proven complementary tools such as SWASS should be deployed without further delay.

Meanwhile, the threat continues to grow. The current outbreak places American livestock, wildlife, pets, rural communities, and potentially even humans at risk. Confirmed detections in Texas and New Mexico demonstrate that this is no longer a distant threat confined to southern Mexico. It is now a direct threat to American agriculture, our livestock industry, our wildlife resources, and our nation's food security.

For that reason, I once again urge USDA to fully evaluate and deploy every proven tool available, including SWASS and other adult suppression technologies. History demonstrates that adult suppression was not an alternative to sterile flies—it was a critical precursor to their success. SWASS reduced the reproductive population, and SIT finished the job.

Sterile flies remain an important component of any eradication program, but the historical record is clear: sterile flies alone did not eliminate the New World screwworm from the United States. Success came from an integrated strategy that first suppressed the wild population and then overwhelmed the remaining flies with sterile males.

We cannot afford to disregard proven tools while the threat advances. USDA successfully defeated this pest once before by employing every effective weapon available. Faced with the same pest and many of the same tools today, we should not hesitate to apply the lessons of that success.

The United States must do so again.

Sincerely,



Sid Miller
Texas Commissioner of Agriculture

cc:

The Honorable Susie Wiles
Assistant to the President and White House Chief of Staff

The Honorable Stephen Miller
Assistant to the President, Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, and Homeland Security Advisor

The Honorable Brooke L. Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture

The Honorable Dudley W. Hoskins
Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Ms. Tate Bennett
Chief of Staff
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Rear Admiral Michael B. Schmoyer, USPHS
Associate Administrator
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Director, New World Screwworm Directorate
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Mr. John Bellinger
Senior Advisor for New World Screwworm Preparedness
U.S. Department of Agriculture