

United States Senate

June 11, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Rollins:

Thank you for your work to protect our nation's robust cattle industry and the integrity of our food supply. The successful eradication of New World Screwworm (NWS) in the 1960s has protected U.S. cattle producers from the severe economic and animal health impacts associated with this parasite. Efforts like this allowed the beef industry to flourish in Nebraska with cattle sales of \$6.2 billion a year. However, the detection of NWS in Mexico in November 2024 served as a reminder that this threat remains.

Following this detection in Mexico, the Trump administration took immediate action. These actions included the suspension of cattle imports from Mexico, the construction of the sterile fly facility in Texas, and the weekly deployment of millions of sterile flies. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) coordination, surveillance, and preparedness measures have been instrumental in slowing the spread of NWS.

Despite taking all available steps, the first U.S. detection of NWS occurred on June 3, 2026, in Zavala County, Texas. To date, five more cases have been found in Texas and one in New Mexico. The USDA responded quickly, deploying 8 million flies per week across affected areas to help contain the outbreak. It is crucial that we continue the fight and eradicate this parasite again. Nebraska's cattle industry is the state's largest sector and is home to over 6.1 million cattle. This pest could cost millions of dollars and, unmitigated, will prevent our nation's ranchers from regrowing our herd.

As USDA prepares for additional biosecurity measures, we encourage USDA to continue working with producers to develop effective prevention, detection, and response strategies. The expedited construction of the sterile fly facility at Moore Air Base in Edinburg, Texas will further the production of sterile flies—the primary method to eradicate NWS. When the new Moore Air Force Base facility is fully operational, 300 million sterile flies will be produced each week. Until then, the only production facility in North America, located in Panama, is supplying and dispersing approximately 100 million sterile flies each week. Continued engagement and coordination with the governments of Mexico and Panama remains essential for effective fly trapping and sterile fly releases.

Thank you for your continued efforts to safeguard our cattle industry and provide mitigation resources to our producers. We remain committed to working alongside USDA to protect the U.S. cattle supply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Pete Ricketts". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

Pete Ricketts
U.S. Senator