

Screwworm Epidemic Worries U.S.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Unless a current epidemic of screwworm fly in the southwest is brought under control, it may be necessary to require livestock inspection at state borders, the Department of Agriculture said Wednesday.

The department said 854 cases of infestation have been reported so far this year in 50 counties of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California — highest count since 1963.

Texas has reported 662 cases, Arizona 133, California 54 and New Mexico 5, the department said.

Dr. E. E. Saulmon, research director in the animal health division, said with the fly population increasing, "this pest could be carried into Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas and southern Oklahoma."

He also warned that the pest could reach states which have been free of it for many years. The current outbreak originated in Mexico, Saulmon added.

More than three billion sterile male flies have been released in Mexico and the United States this year in an effort to break the reproductive cycle.

A control program was begun in 1963, when annual losses reached an estimated \$25 to \$100 million.

The female lays her eggs in any open wound on warm-blooded animals and the larvae then infest the creature.