

## Southwest Animal Health Research Foundation / USDA Sterile Screwworm Fly Rearing Facility Pacora, Panama



The Southwest Animal Health Research Foundation (SWAHRF) dedicated a new laboratory facility on July 12, 2006 that will produce sterile screwworm flies to form a permanent biological barrier across the Isthmus of Panama.

The \$40 million laboratory is a joint venture between the United States Department of Agriculture and the government of Panama. COPEG, a commission made up of representatives of Panama's Ministry of Agriculture and the USDA will operate the facility. McKinney and Company and its subsidiary McKinney Internacional of Panama provided full design services and on-site construction management for the project over the 30-month construction of the 227,000 SF complex. The plant has been delivered on schedule and within the budget.

The New World Screwworm was first reported in the southeastern part of the U.S. in 1933. Screwworm flies thrive in tropical and semi-tropical climates. The fly is an obligate parasite of mammals, and the larvae feed on living tissue. Livestock damage can run in the billions of dollars annually. The last local case of screwworm in the U.S. was August 1982, Mexico was declared free in 1991. Eradication of the screwworm through Panama was initiated in 1998 to ensure complete protection of the North American continent. Eradication of the screwworm has been successful only when the sterile-male technique has been applied to a targeted geographic area.

Located on the site of a former sugar plantation just west of Pacora, Panama, the new Screwworm Rearing Facility is capable of producing over 150 million sterile flies per week. The process of sterilization typically involves the exposure of adult flies to 5,000 rads of gamma radiation. In Panama, x-ray devices will be used. The sterile, adult flies are released from specially equipped aircraft over the targeted geographic



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