

Big Maggot-like worms in White-tailed deer Nose

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If you cut off a set of antlers and see large “maggot-looking” organisms in the nasal cavities of a buck you harvested. Try not to be too alarmed or grossed-out. These are called Nasal Bots. They are the larvae of flies in the genus *Cephenemyia*. There are no outward signs that they are present, and no sores have been associated with nasal bots. Nasal Bots occur in many species of North American cervids (antlered animals), but are **not** found in domestic animals.

The larvae have to be removed and saved in alcohol if you want to be sure that what you are looking at is indeed nasal bots. The life cycle of nasal bots begins when an adult female fly lays her eggs around the nose or mouth of the deer. The eggs are released when the deer licks them off the nose. The larvae then migrate into the nasal passages and molt (grow and shed skins) until eventually they drop to the ground to pupate and adult flies emerge. Nasal bots are not considered harmful to deer even in very large numbers, although they do cause concern in the hunters who notice them. The deer meat is safe to consume.

This information was adapted from the Field Manual of Wildlife Diseases in the Southeastern United States Second Edition, by William R. Davidson and Victor F. Nettles. 1997. Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, College of Vet. Medicine, U. of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602-7393