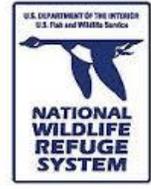


Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Florida Keys National  
Wildlife Refuge Complex  
179 Key Deer Blvd  
Big Pine Key, FL 33043

# News Release



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partnering With Public to Help Save Endangered Key Deer**

BIG PINE KEY, FL -- Linda Douville has called No Name Key home for 30 years. In that time, she's come to love the tiny Key deer that frequent her yard and thinks of them as "friends."

In September, Linda noticed a Key deer lying motionless in her breezeway. Upon closer inspection, she noticed it had deep wounds, prompting her to call wildlife officials.

Since Key deer are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) team responded and saw that the deer's wounds were filled with fly larvae (maggots).

"At that point they didn't know for sure what the problem was," said Linda.

Ultimately, in late September Service biologists sent samples of the maggots, as well as tissue samples from infected deer, to labs for analysis and identification. It was determined that wounds were infested with screwworm larvae.

New World screwworms can infest livestock and other warm-blooded animals. They most often enter an animal through an open wound and feed on the animal's living tissue. If untreated, screwworm infestations can be fatal.

On Oct. 3, 2016, the USDA confirmed the presence of New World screwworm in Key deer at the National Key Deer Wildlife Refuge on Big Pine Key.

"They're helpless creatures as far as fighting something like this," said Linda. "These deer are precious to all of us. It's painful to see our friends suffering."

That pain inspired Linda to become one of over 170 local residents who are volunteering to help the Service respond to the screwworm crisis. She's part of a trained group working under trained wildlife professionals to proactively treat Key deer by delivering an anti-parasitic medication to the deer that's soaked into bread, crackers, or other doughy foods to deliver the proper dosage.

Our community volunteers are a vital part of the ‘all hands on deck’ attitude we’re taking in response to this outbreak,” said Dan Clark, Refuge Manager of the four National Wildlife Refuges in the Florida Keys. “The Service is committed to working with the local community and tapping into their caring spirit to help provide medication to as many Key deer as possible and hopefully put this crisis in our rearview mirrors.”

As of October 24, over 40 Service employees from as far away as Minnesota and Iowa had deployed to the lower Keys to support the effort to save Key deer. Together, Service employees, wildlife professionals from partner agencies and trained community refuge volunteers have administered 811 doses of the antiparasitic drug Doramectin to Key deer.

One of the Service employees helping save the Key deer is wildlife biologist Katrina Marklevits, from the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Florida. She arrived here October 22 and wants to stay indefinitely. “This response is important because Key deer are endangered. I like being on the front lines...helping to get organized and getting our procedures together,” she said. “I’m confident we are making a difference.”

Katrina’s inspired by how much the citizen volunteers are involved. “These deer are part of their lives. The deer are fortunate to have citizens who care so much and are so dedicated and hopeful. They’re also very thankful for our efforts,” she said.

Linda added, “We greatly appreciate that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service summoned the troops and is working hard on this problem. Our community is very active and concerned, as well. This would be a tremendous loss if we don’t stay on top of this and get it fixed. I’m in for as long as it takes.”

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For more information, please contact Kevin Lowry, Chief Public Information Officer, National Key Deer Refuge, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 305-872-2239 ext 229, USFWSscrewworminfo@gmail.com and follow Refuge updates on our website and Facebook page: [www.fws.gov/refuge/National\\_Key\\_Deer\\_Refuge/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Key_Deer_Refuge/) [www.facebook.com/floridakeysrefuges](http://www.facebook.com/floridakeysrefuges)

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*The National Wildlife Refuge System protects wildlife and wildlife habitat on more than 150 million acres of land and water from the Caribbean to the Pacific, Maine to Alaska. Refuges also improve human health, provide outdoor recreation, and support local economies. Visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>.*

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov/>.*