Introduction. The sheep botfly larvae of Oestrus ovis usually infest nasal and paranasal cavities of goats and sheep. Accidentally, larvae can be deposited into human eyes and infestation is known as external ophthalmomyiasis (OM). This very rare condition is more common among people living close to farming communities (like shepherds). Here, we report three cases of OM externa occurred in patients living in La Spezia province (Le Cinque Terre).

Methods. Larvae were removed from patients’ eyes and identified by light microscopy examination. The whitish larva displayed the body segments, the two typical anterior hooks (sharply curved) and several spikes along the body characteristic of the first stage larva of botfly Oestrus ovis.

Results. In the summer of 2004, three people presented to the emergency room, reporting symptoms like pain, burning, itching, and resembling a condition similar to conjunctivitis. At a slit lamp examination, the physician noted various larvae with a white transparent body of about 1 mm. These were firmly attached to the conjunctiva and consequently, removed by using fine forceps and sent to the laboratory for identification. The patients were treated with antibiotics to prevent secondary bacterial infections and re-examined to rule out other complications or existence of additional larvae.

Conclusions. Cases of myiasis have been described all around the world and also in different Italian regions (Sicily, Tuscany, Umbria, Abruzzo) but infestation affected primarily farming people living in close contact with sheep. So far, it is the first time that three cases of ophthalmomyiasis are described in Liguria region and among people with no contact with farm animals or recent travels through sheep farming areas. We believe that, although the OM is an uncommon condition in Italy, it is important a prompt recognition and treatment of occasional infestation to improve patient care and reduce the potential complications (penetration of larvae into the ocular globe).