

# Feral Hogs in Arkansas



## Presenters

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# Feral Hogs in Arkansas

1. Natural history & biology
2. Pest problems
3. Trapping & removal methods
4. Legal aspects
5. Public opinion



# What is a Feral Hog?

- Different names, same animal (*Sus scrofa*)
  - Feral hogs, wild pigs, wild hogs, feral pigs, wild swine, feral swine
  - Not native to North and South America
  - Eurasian or Russian wild boars = *Sus scrofa*
- Javelina or collard peccary (*Tayassu tajacu*)
  - NOT *Sus scrofa*
  - native to the Americas



Photograph by Robert Poletto



# Definition

- Domesticated swine released accidentally or purposefully for sport hunting.
- After generation or two, progeny appear untamed with thickened fur and tusks.



# Physical Characteristics

- Various colors, shapes, sizes
- Classified as:
  - domestic ancestry (most common)
  - Eurasian or Russian wild boar (pure strains are rare)
  - hybrids of domestic & Eurasian/Russian wild boar
- Eurasian wild boars
  - bristle hairs on back (razorback)
  - coat of brown to black hairs with white or tan tips (grizzled coloration)



# History of Arkansas Feral Hogs

- Early settlement - free range
  - Settlers regularly let hogs roam free
- 1900's fencing laws
  - ignored in several parts of state where free-range a common practice
- 1977 low numbers
  - estimated feral hogs in about 4% of Arkansas
- 1990's to present
  - releases & relocation presumably for sport hunting



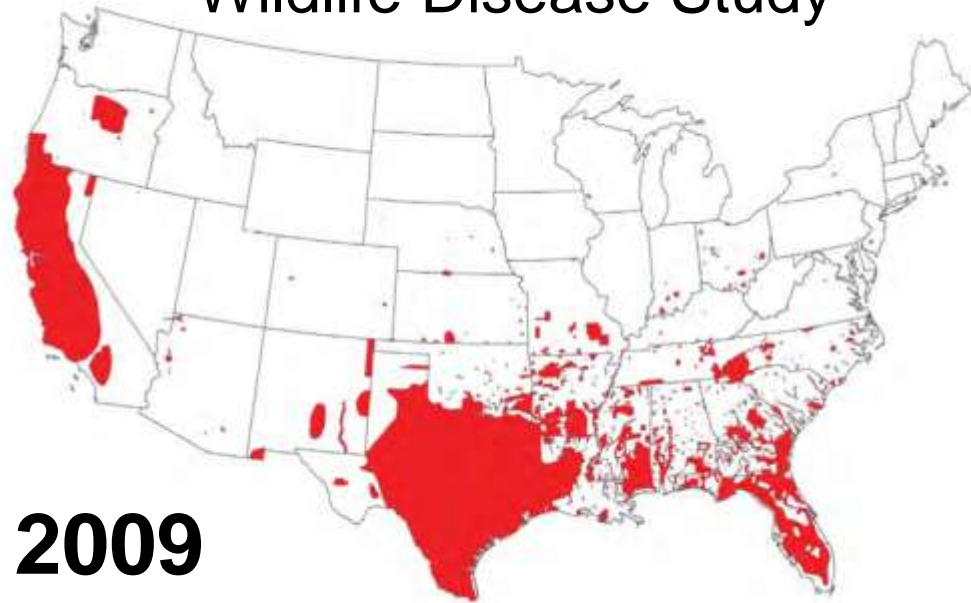
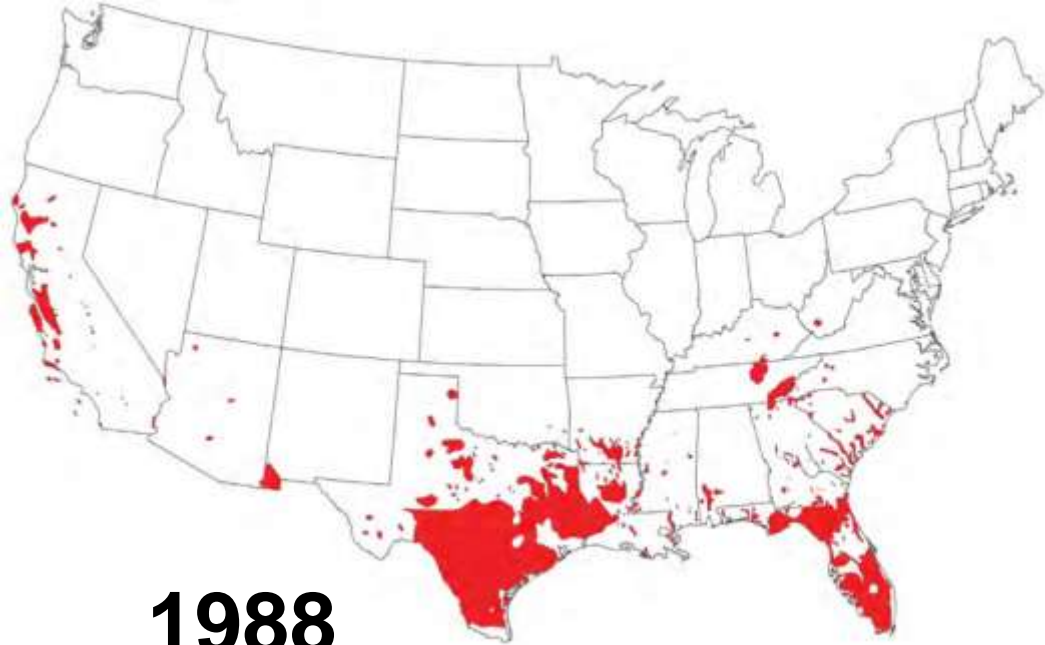


# National Feral Swine Mapping System

Southeast Cooperative  
Wildlife Disease Study

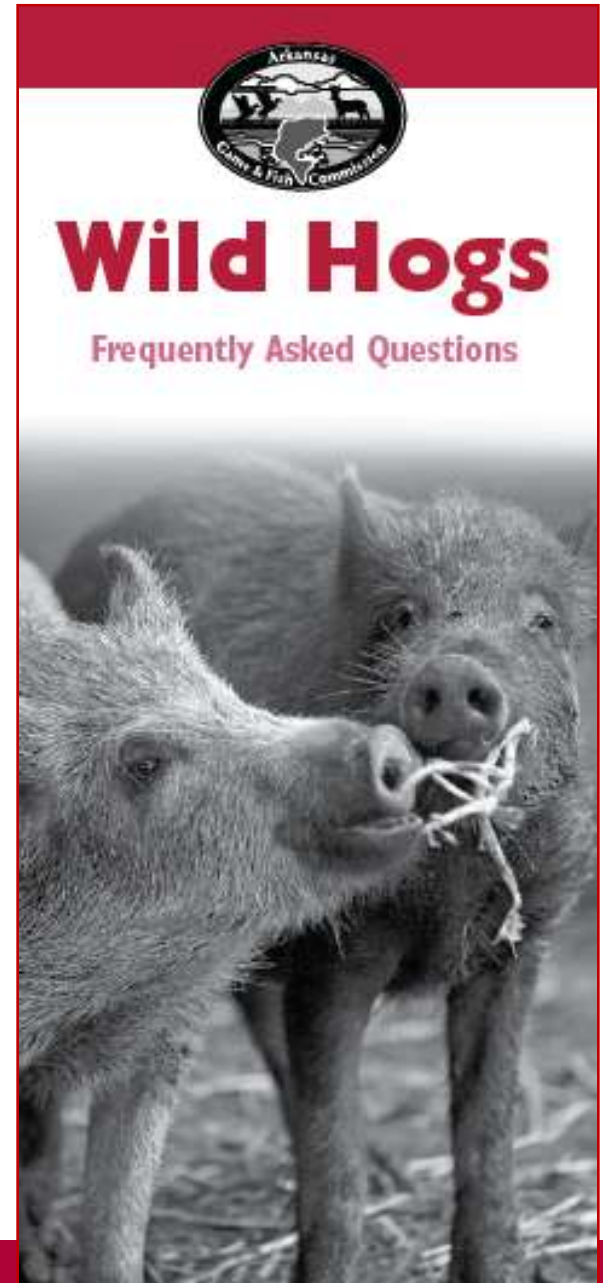
**1988**

**2009**



# Current Arkansas Distribution

- Reports from wildlife biologists and managers at Wildlife Management Areas
- Hogs present in every county in the state
  - Arkansas Game & Fish Commission





# Life History

- Live 4 – 5 years, up to 8 years
- Found in variety of habitats
  - prefer moist bottomlands
  - riparian areas near rivers, creeks, streams, lakes, ponds, marshes, bogs, swamps and sloughs
  - dense vegetation
- Adaptable
  - size of home range depends on habitat quality
  - can swim to cover during flood events



# Temporal Patterns & Home Range

- Active any time day or night
- Activity patterns affected by:
  - high temperatures
    - have no sweat glands
  - food resource availability
  - human activity
    - will reduce movements & change home ranges to avoid
- Home range
  - 100's to 1000's acres
  - travel up to 15 miles in Oklahoma



# Reproductive Potential

- Sows reach puberty at 6 – 10 months
- Litter size 3 to 8 piglets, average 6, some  $\geq 10$
- Sows capable of producing two litters per year, though majority produce one
- Breed year-round
- Boars range widely in search of mates



"Wild pigs are perhaps the most prolific large mammal on earth."  
*Managing Wild Pigs - A Technical Guide*



# Predation

- Low natural mortality after reaching 40+ pounds
- Documented predation by alligators, black bears & mountain lions
- Hunting is most significant cause of mortality



# Social Structure

- Sounders
  - a group of feral sows and their offspring, up to 3 related generations
- Bachelor groups
  - sub-adult to adult boars, usually siblings or cousins
  - young males always disperse from sounder around 16 months of age
- Individual adult boars
  - typically solitary and move greater distances than sounders



# Feeding Habits

- Opportunistic omnivores
  - eat many different foods when available
- $\geq 85\%$  plants and invertebrates
  - roots, grasses, forbs, mast (nuts & berries)
  - worms, insects and insect larvae
- Occasional animal matter
  - carcasses
  - eggs & young of ground-nesting birds
  - reptiles, amphibians, small mammals & their young





# Rooting

- Residential lawns, pastures
- Creek/stream banks
- Forest understory removal & impede regeneration
- Invasive plant encroachment





# Rubbing

- Stunt or girdle trees
- Compact soil around tree roots
- Impede forest regeneration



# Wallowing



- Holes create back road hazards, break field equipment
- Soil erosion & sedimentation
- Fecal matter found in water supplies, swimming holes





# Wildlife Impacts

- Consume eggs of ground-nesting birds, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals
- Compete directly with wildlife for food resources



# Hunting Impacts

- Additional recreation opportunity
- Food source
- Expenditures for equipment & dogs
  - GPS receivers
  - ATVs
  - Hog dogs, collars, training equipment
- Some receive income from selling “hog hunts”



# Hog Sign

- Can be secretive & nocturnal to avoid human activity
- First indications of presence may be their sign



White-tailed Deer



Feral Hog



# Feral Hog Attacks on Humans

- Attacks occur, but rare
- Consequences range from minor injuries to fatalities
  - Most were mauled (67%)
- At risk circumstances
  - Walking alone
  - Walking with dogs
- Attackers mostly solitary male hogs
- Hog was threatened in 38% of attacks



Review of 330 attacks  
from 1825 to 2010  
by John J. Mayer



# Controlling Feral Hogs

## What is control?

- Depends on your goal
  - Eradication – complete elimination
  - Population reduction
    - Must be significant and sustained
    - Hog populations that are reduced by up to 70% can return to pre-control levels in less than 3 years if anti-hog measures aren't sustained
- May have to determine some level of “acceptable” damage you're willing to live with

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# Control Methods

- Hunting
  - Santa Cruz Islands and Fort Benning, Georgia
- Hunting with hog dogs
- Castrating/euthanizing
- Trapping

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# Trap Types





# Pen Traps









# Recommended Traps

**WILD HOG  
MANAGEMENT TOOL**

**\$ 388**

**Corral traps better than box traps.....**



# Trap Door Gates & Triggers

- Single-catch gate
  - Inexpensive
  - Non-target species prone to capture
- Multi-catch gate
  - Saloon
  - Rooter
- Root stick
- Trip wires



# Trap Doors – Rooter Gate



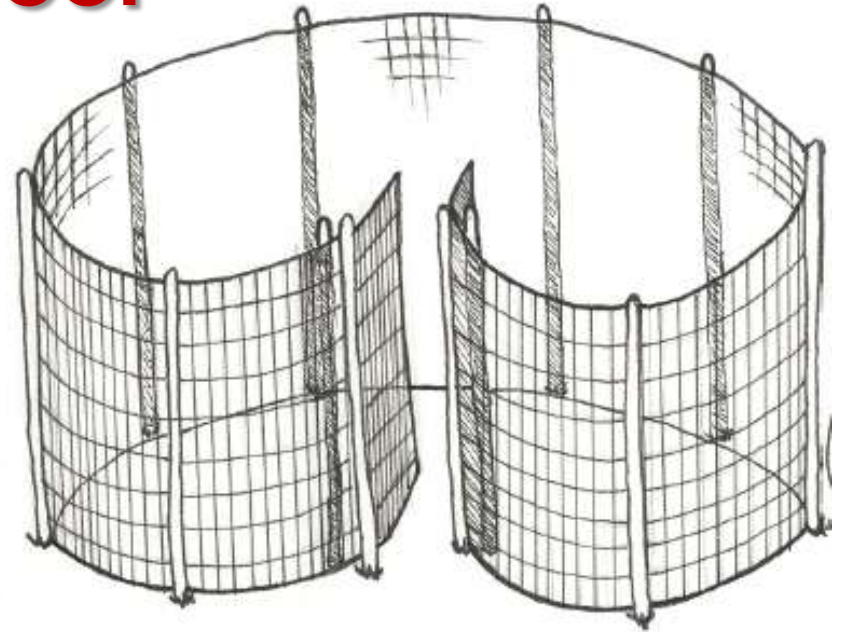
- Set to let hogs in until doors are triggered
- “Rooter” option lets hogs continue to push into the trap
- Multiple panels lets small hogs in without opening gate enough for others to get out
- Expensive

Blake Sasse, 2010



# Trap Doors – No Door

- Cheapest option
- Seems to catch as many as those with doors
- Can bend back one of the door panels and tie it to a trip wire so it slams shut when a hog hits it



Blake Sasse, 2010



# Bait Types

- **Corn**
- **Fermented corn**
- **“Buck Jam”**
  - **150 lbs of corn, 8 lbs of sugar, 2-3 packets of yeast and 5-6 packets of strawberry jello**
  - **Seal in metal drums and let ferment for about 4 weeks**

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# Setting the Trap

- Scout for feral hog sign
  - often shaded areas, thick cover near watercourse
  - converging hog trails
- Pre-baiting before setting corral trap
- Trail/game camera to verify feral hog activity & numbers
- Snares around perimeter of corral & pig trails



# Captured Hogs

- Meat for the freezer
- Donate to *Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry*
- Disposal options





# Legal Aspects of Feral Hog Control



**AR Livestock & Poultry Commission**

# Legal Definitions

- Those swine that are free-roaming or released onto a game preserve or hunting area and/or
- A stray domestic hog becomes feral 5 calendar days after escaping domestic confinement.

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# Arkansas Game & Fish Commission (AGFC)

- Defined as a non-game animal in Arkansas
  - AGFC regulates the harvesting of feral hogs in Arkansas
    - Public Lands
    - Private Lands

[www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com)

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# Arkansas Livestock & Poultry Commission (ALPC)

- ALPC regulates the “commercial” aspect of feral hog management in Arkansas
  - Trapping on private lands
    - Slaughter on the spot
    - Transportation to a holding area or hunting preserve
    - Domestication



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# Arkansas Livestock & Poultry Commission (ALPC)

- **Transportation**

- May be transported to a game reserve or hunting area if they test negative for brucellosis and pseudorabies within 30 days of capture,

**HOWEVER**

- They may not be turned out from confinement until a second check of the diseases happens at least 60 days from initial capture.

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# Arkansas Livestock & Poultry Commission (ALPC)

- **Confinement (2 important factors)**
  - **DISEASE TESTING**
  - **FENCING**

<http://www.arlpc.org/>



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# Feral Hog Resources



- Wild Pig Info website  
[www.wildpiginfo.com](http://www.wildpiginfo.com)

– Mississippi State University

- Feral Hog Community of Practice

[www.extension.com](http://www.extension.com)

Feral Hog CoP on Facebook



# Public Opinion

- Study objective: gather stakeholders comments about possible management strategies/suggestions

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# Positive Interactions

- What does the public perceive as a positive interaction?
  - Hunting (~43%)
  - Trapping (~17%)
    - Viewing (~7%)
  - Food source (~34%)
    - Breeding (~.01%)
  - Monetary Gain (~.02%)





# Positive Feedback

## ACTUAL COMMENTS

- “I feel that although there are isolated instances of nuisance feral hogs, they pose no harm to the entire state.”
- “No wild animal should be killed out. We need everything to balance mother nature-that's what's wrong with this world.”

# Land use interaction

- By managing your land for wildlife (ONLY) you will have a higher probability of having a positive encounter with a feral hog.



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# Negative Feedback

What does the public deem as a negative interaction?

- Rooting (~59%)
- Equipment Damage (~33%)
- Vehicle Collision (~6%)
- Livestock Nuisance (~13%)
- Monetary Loss (~16%)



# Other Negative Interactions

- ~14%
  - Wildlife nuisance
    - Habitat destruction
    - Predation
  - Negative encounter in the wild
  - Negative pet encounter
  - Destruction of managed forest land





# Negative Feedback

## ACTUAL COMMENTS

- “There has to be something done with all the pigs. There are too many and they are eating all the food for the deer.”
- “Increase punishment for those that release pigs into wild. Allow the killing of all free-roaming pigs. Owner is responsible for confinement of hogs. Bounties on pig tails.”

# Negative Feedback con't

## ACTUAL COMMENTS

- “Hogs are a menace. We hunt them in our club and use the meat in the fall/winter months.”
- “During the dry summers, hogs move up from the river bottoms. We have killed them in our yard. Wildlife nuisance and destruction of fields from rooting is also a major problem.”



# Land usage and presence?

**By managing your land for both timber and wildlife, you have a higher probability of encountering and having a negative impact with a feral hog.**

# Other Feedback

## ACTUAL COMMENTS

- “Property owners should have the right to kill pigs at anytime if they are a nuisance.”
- “They should be hunted to extinction. They shouldn’t be released on private land unless they have a hog proof enclosure.”
- “There is a lack of education as to how feral swine can be trapped and hunted out of regular hunting seasons.”



# Summary

- Feral hogs are primarily herbivores that feed mostly on roots and tubers.
- Feral hog activities can affect forest health, composition & regeneration.
- Hunting and transporting feral hogs is regulated by the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission and the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission.
- Corral trapping is the recommended method for feral hog control.

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# Conclusion

- Feral hog population control depends on three factors:
  - Established population
  - Control goals
  - “Your neighbor”



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# Conclusion

- As of now, people tend to view hog impacts as negative over positive in Arkansas.
- **EDUCATION TO THE PUBLIC!**



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# Acknowledgements

## Advisory Committee

- Dr. Alexandra Locher
- Dr. Sayeed Mehmood
- Dr. Becky McPeake

## Cooperators



**AR Livestock & Poultry Commission**





# Any Questions?

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