

Managing Feral Hogs:

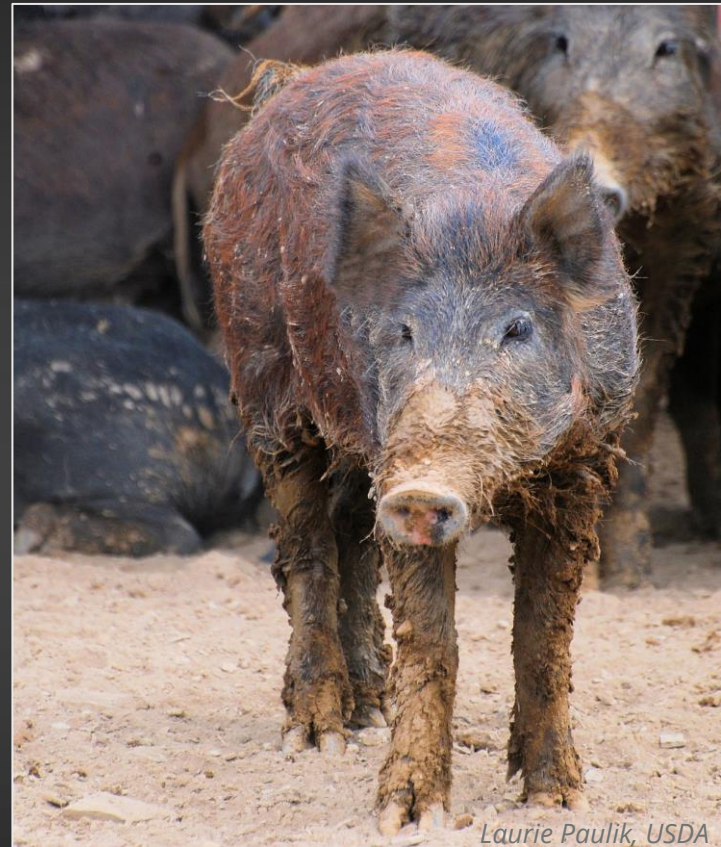
Basics of wild pig management



© David Campbell

Overview

1. Know thy enemy
2. Know thy tools



Know Thy Enemy: *Sus scrofa*

- Lots of common names!
- Domestic swine
 - Extensive in southeast Texas by 1830s
 - Subsequent releases and escapes
- Eurasian wild boar
 - Introduced to Texas in 1930s
- Domestic swine x Eurasian wild boar



Diet

Omnivorous and opportunistic

“Will eat anything that contains a calorie.”

– *Dr. Billy Higginbotham*

- Plants
- Mushrooms
- Invertebrates
- Mammals
- Birds
- Carrion
- Crops



Social Structure

- Solitary males
 - Compete for breeding opportunities and food
- Sounders
 - Mature female(s) + litter(s)
 - 2-50+ individuals



Reproduction

- Females

- Breed at 6-12 months
- In heat every 18-24 days until bred
- Gestation = 115 days
- 4-6 piglets/litter, multiple litters per year

- Males

- Breed at 12-18 months
- Fight for opportunity to breed



Rodney Barnhart

Lifespan

- Can live up to 8 years (average is 4-5)
 - Few natural predators
 - Sows aggressively defend piglets
 - Group vigilance and defensiveness



Habitat

- “The Ultimate Generalist”
- Food availability is the primary driver of habitat choice
 - Concentrate near mast trees and agriculture



Habitat

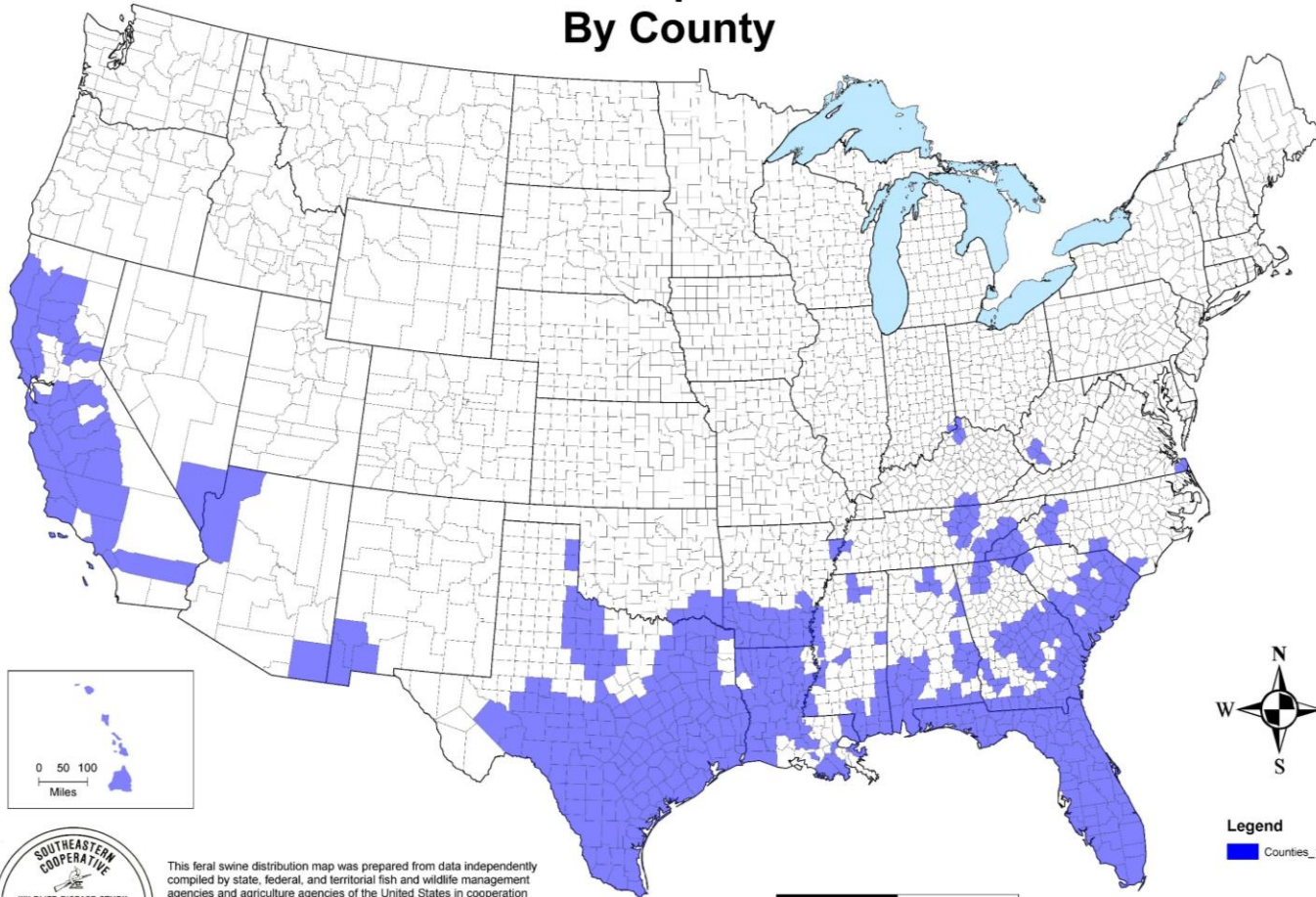
- Thermoregulation is secondary driver
 - Wild pigs lack sweat glands
 - Wallowing
 - Using shaded areas
 - Feeding nocturnally
 - Prefer areas near permanent water



Janet and Phil (Flickr)

Historic Distribution

Feral Swine Populations 1982 By County



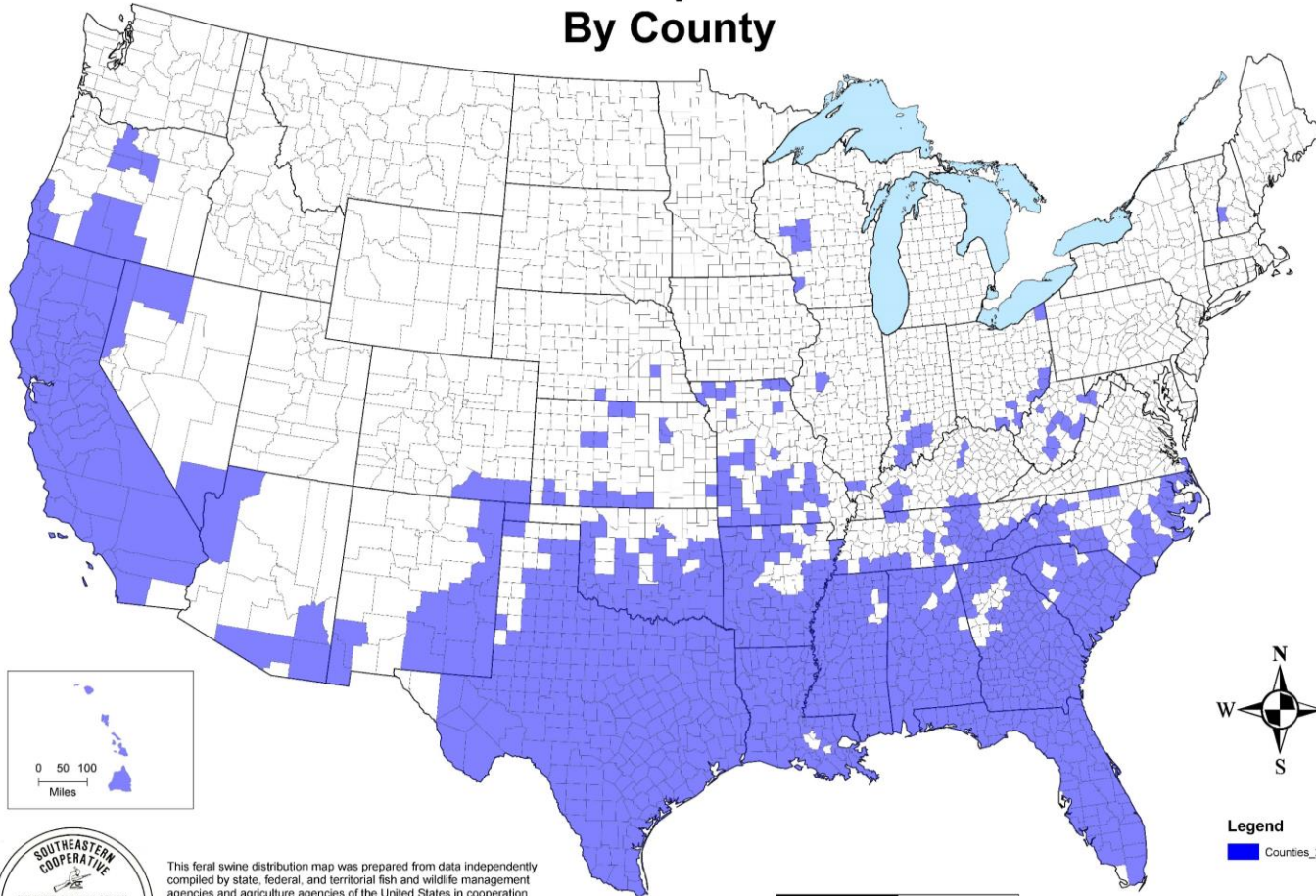
This feral swine distribution map was prepared from data independently compiled by state, federal, and territorial fish and wildlife management agencies and agriculture agencies of the United States in cooperation with the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia. Support for this project was through Cooperative Agreement Number 16-9100-1407-GA, Veterinary Services, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Last Updated 12/31/2016
UGA-CGR



Historic Distribution

Feral Swine Populations 2004 By County



Legend

■ Counties_2004

0 125 250 500
Miles

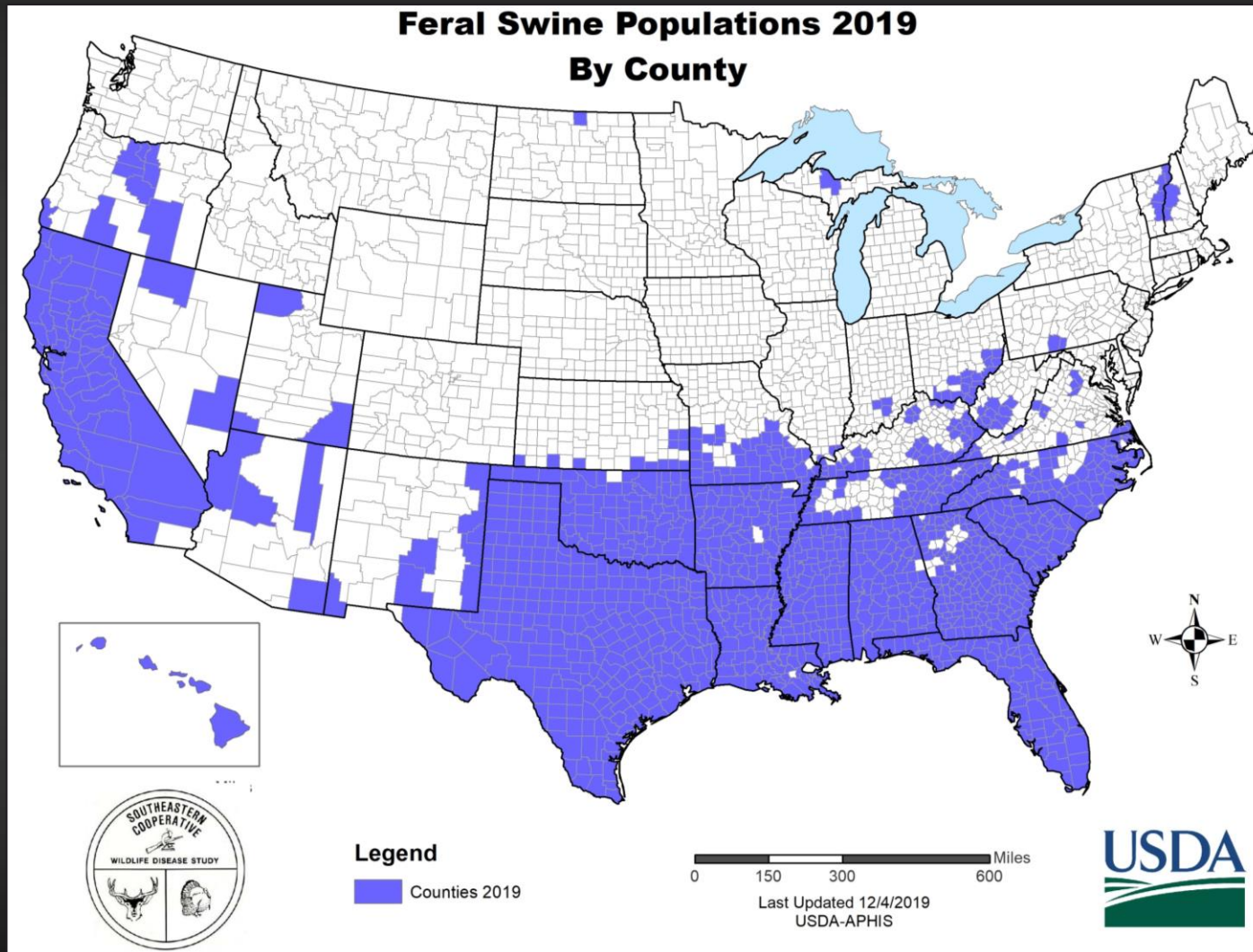
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Current Distribution



Impacts

- Loss of riparian vegetation
- Increased runoff and sedimentation
- Erosion
- Bacterial contamination
- Watershed impairment
- Soil compaction
- Negative changes in plant communities



Bernard Dupont

Impacts

- Kill or wound trees
- Kill and eat wildlife
- Destroy critical habitat
- Compete with native species



USDA (all images)

Impacts

- Spread disease
- Competition with livestock
- Documented predation on lambs, kids, and calves
- Rooting and trampling of crops
- Soil erosion and compaction



Tyler Campbell, USDA



Justin Stevenson, USDA

Impacts

- Carry diseases that are transmissible to livestock, pets, and humans, such as swine brucellosis
- Vehicle collisions
- Damage property: cemeteries, lawns, sports fields



Scott Patrom

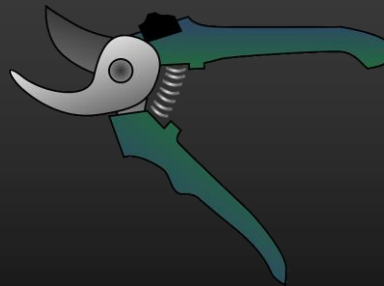
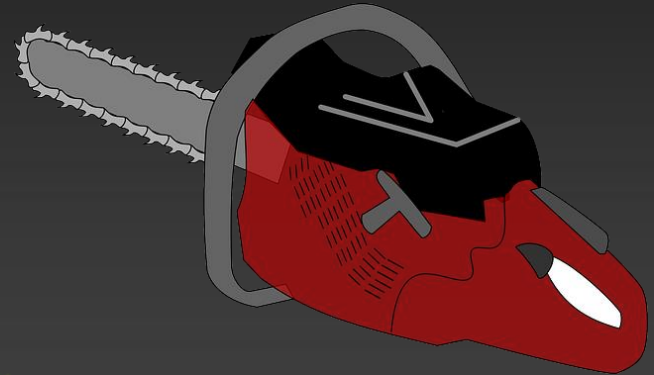
Tracks and Sign



Landowner Tools: Integrated Pest Management



Why Tool Choice Matters



Know the Law

- Status: free-ranging livestock
- Ownership: the landowner
- Hunting
 - No license required
 - Hunters education required
- Movement
 - Live movement is strictly prohibited, except:
 1. To an approved "hunting preserve": marked **males only**
 - Regulated by TPWD
 2. To an approved buying station: males and females
 - Regulated by TAHC



Janet and Phil (Flickr)

Put on Your Armor

Pigs are gross, y'all

- **Gloves** – double set
- Safety glasses or sunglasses
- Wash tools and work surfaces with bleach
- Wash your hands
- Cook meat thoroughly
 - 160° internal temperature



Before You Do Anything Else...

- Reduce wild pig access to wildlife supplement
 - Fencing 28-33" high



Tool: Box Traps

Box trap

- Catches 1-2 adult pigs or a small group of juveniles
- Mobile and easy to set
- Non-targets cannot escape
- Higher cost per pig captured



Tool: Corral Traps

- Corral trap
 - Capture up to an entire sounder
 - Non-targets can escape
 - High initial cost and labor, low cost per pig captured



John Tomeček

Corral Traps

- Corral trap components
 - Head gate or funnel
 - 1 or more
 - Tear-drop shaped
 - 4" utility panels
 - Usually at least 6 panels
 - 5' panel height
 - 4' t-post spacing



Corral Trap Options

Continuous catch gates



Rooter



Funnel

Corral Trap Options

Non-continuous catch gates



Guillotine



Saloon/swinging door

Corral Trap Options

Manual triggers: general



Pressure plate



Tripwire



Trough trigger

Corral Trap Options

Manual triggers: hog specific



Rooter stick



Bucket trigger



Tire trigger

Corral Trap Options

- Remote triggers
 - Can be triggered with remotes, cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices
 - Relatively expensive
 - Many are integrated with cameras



Corral Trap Options

- Bait – variety of options
- Goal is to attract hogs and reduce non- targets
- Be aware of other food sources



Photos: AgriLife, Jackson's orchard, Chesapeake Bay Program, Edd Prince

Tool: Shooting

Taking a pig with any legal firearm

- Relatively inexpensive, low setup cost
- Accessories
 - Night vision, thermal, infrared
 - Solar lighting
 - Suppressors
- No license needed
 - Hunters ed required
- Remove very few pigs



Photo credit Orly Botello

Tool: Aerial Gunning

Shooting pigs from a helicopter

- Remove large numbers of pigs at a time, though not necessarily all
- Can be expensive, but also cost-effectiveness
- Requires a permit and a licensed pilot

As with other techniques, this is a process, not an event



Tool: Snares

- Catching pigs with a wire snare
 - Easy and quick to set up
 - Relatively inexpensive and requires little maintenance
 - Can capture trap-shy pigs
 - Requires anchor point
 - Risk to non-target species
 - Capture 1 pig at a time
 - Increased efficacy during aerial shooting



Tool: Dogs

- Trained dogs bay and hold a pig, which is then dispatched by a hunter
 - Remove a few pigs at a time
 - Can pressure pigs out of an area
 - Legal considerations



Tool: Chemical Control

What makes a good chemical control option?

- Safe
 - Safe for humans to handle
 - Safe for wildlife
- Humane
- Effective
- Cost

Tool: Chemical Control

1. Toxicant: Warfarin
 - Approved by EPA; currently no Texas label
 - Anticoagulant; internal bleeding is cause of death
 - AgriLife conducting field evaluation until Summer 2023
2. Toxicant: Sodium Nitrite
 - Underwent final field testing (Summer 2021)
 - Starves red blood cells for oxygen
 - Preparing information to present to EPA for consideration
3. Contraceptives
 - Inhibit reproduction without lethal control
 - Relies on regular consumption
 - Many options, but lack proof of effectiveness

County Level Tools: Grant Funding

- County Government Grants
- Farm Bill Swine Eradication Project



County Government Grants

- Open to all counties
 - Hire trappers
 - Buy traps
 - Set bounties
 - Education*



Cissy Beasley

© CISSY BEASLEY

Bounties

- 1:1 match of grant funding
- Grant maximum is 5\$ per pig
 - Pros - Highly visible
 - Cons - Ineffective, People lie
- Recommend including an affidavit





Farm Bill Swine Eradication Project

- Select counties set by USDA
- Encourage participation
 - Wildlife Services
 - Trap loan program
 - Reporting staff

Resources

- Texas A&M AgriLife Learn
 - English and Spanish publications
- Coping with Feral Hogs website
 - feralhogs.tamu.edu *New content coming soon*
- Feral Hogs Community of Practice website
 - Ask an Expert, 50+ articles, videos, webinars



Resources

- Wildlife and Fisheries Science YouTube Channel
www.youtube.com/user/WFSCAgriLife/playlists
 - Wild Pig Management Video Series
 - Feral Hogs
- List of TAHC-approved buying stations
www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/swine/FeralSwineFacilities.pdf
- Interactive map of buying stations
<https://tahc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6406b01b5b284f2398c3117928869808>

Thank you! Questions?



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