Knowing If Feral Swine Are in Your Area

Feral swine damage is often caused at night when the animals are most active. The best way to tell if feral swine are active in your area is to look for common signs of rooting, rubbing, wallowing, tracks, and trails.

Reducing Feral Swine Damage

Experts with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) are working in collaboration with State, local, and tribal officials to reduce the threats caused by feral swine to our country's livestock, native ecosystems, and human and animal health. You can help be part of the solution.

- ***Report feral swine activity*** to the proper wildlife and agriculture officials in your State. You may also call APHIS Wildlife Services toll free at 1-866-4USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297) for assistance in dealing with feral swine.
- ***Do not relocate feral swine*** without the proper permits. It is illegal in most States to trap and move feral swine.
- If you raise domestic pigs, ***take adequate biosecurity measures*** at your facility to prevent the accidental release of domestic pigs or the interaction between feral swine and domestic pigs.

To learn more about feral swine and the diseases they carry, visit these Web sites.

- ***APHIS***

  www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage

  www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/swine

- ***Centers for Disease Control and Prevention***

  www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/brucellosis

  www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis

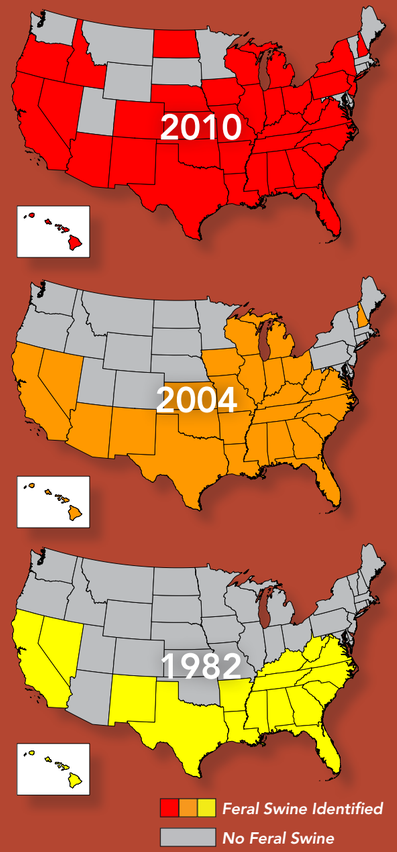
- ***National Feral Swine Mapping System, University of Georgia***

  http://128.192.20.53/nfsms

Feral swine often forage alongside livestock and eat grains, mineral blocks, and other items intended for cattle. APHIS animal health experts are concerned that such close contact can result in the transmission of disease from feral swine to livestock and people.

Distribution of Feral Swine Over Time

Feral swine are quickly spreading across the United States due to natural population growth, illegal movement by sports hunters, and escapes from domestic swine operations. Experts estimate their numbers at over 5 million animals nationwide.



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Feral Swine:
Damage and Disease Threats

Free-ranging populations of feral swine (also called feral hogs and wild pigs) in the United States are located in at least 35 States. Some experts estimate their numbers at over 5 million, with the largest populations located in California, Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas. This species causes extensive damage and disease threats to public property, native ecosystems, livestock health, and human health. Feral swine populations will continue to spread across the country as a result of natural range expansion, illegal trapping and movement by people, and accidental releases or escapes from domestic swine operations.

The expanding populations of feral swine are a significant concern to farmers, livestock producers, natural resource managers, and animal health officials. However, feral swine issues are not limited to natural areas and rural environments. Feral swine are highly adaptable and are becoming more common in suburban areas, rooting up lawns, gardens, golf courses, and city parks.

Relocations of feral swine have resulted in extensive crossbreeding, producing variations in appearance. Some look like traditional wild boars, while others look more like domestic pigs in body shape and color. It is often difficult to distinguish feral swine from domestic swine based on appearance alone.

In just a few nights, feral swine can decimate lawns, native habitats, and pasturelands. Common feral swine damage includes wallowing, tree rubbing, and rooting.

An Invasive Species

Feral swine are an invasive species. They are not native to the United States and should not be confused with the collared peccary (javelina), a native pig-like mammal of the Southwest. Today's feral swine are descendants of domestic swine that were first introduced to the United States in 1539 by Spanish explorers. Following their arrival, it was common practice for settlers to allow their domestic swine to roam freely. Many years later, sport hunters introduced true Eurasian wild boars into certain areas where their bloodlines mixed with domestic swine. Due to their extensive crossbreeding, feral swine often vary in appearance and can be mistaken for domestic pigs.

The Cost of Feral Swine Damage

It is estimated that feral swine in the United States cause more than $1.5 billion in damages and control costs each year. For example, rooting and wallowing activities cause property damage and erosion to river banks. Feral swine eat and destroy field crops such as corn, milo, rice, watermelon, spinach, peanuts, hay, turf, and wheat. They are also efficient predators and, when given the opportunity, prey upon young livestock and other small animals, such as ground-nesting birds.

In addition, their rooting activities destroy native vegetation, and invasive plants often re-vegetate damaged areas, reducing native plants and grasses. Their wallowing activities can contaminate water supplies and impact water quality. These animals have also been known to destroy livestock and game fences and consume livestock feed, minerals, and protein supplements.

Disease and Feral Swine

Feral swine have been known to carry or transmit over 30 diseases and 37 parasites that can be transmitted to livestock, people, pets, and wildlife.

Feral swine can carry several diseases that affect domestic swine. If a foreign animal disease, such as classical swine fever or foot-and-mouth disease, were to enter the United States, feral swine could spread the disease to domestic swine or other susceptible animals. Once prevalent in feral swine populations, the disease would be extremely difficult to eradicate. Another concern is the potential for feral swine to reintroduce diseases that have been eradicated in U.S. livestock. For example, domestic swine are now free of pseudorabies and swine brucellosis. If reinfection through feral swine should occur, it would be economically devastating to the pork industry.

APHIS wildlife disease biologists monitor feral swine for the presence of more than 10 diseases that can affect livestock, people, and pets.

Impacts to People and Pets

Though a rare occurrence, feral swine can directly infect people with diseases. For example, brucellosis (or undulant fever) can be transmitted to people when blood or other body fluid from an infected animal comes into contact with a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or open wound.

Feral swine can also carry harmful organisms and diseases such as toxoplasmosis, tularemia, trichinellosis, swine influenza, salmonella, *E. coli*, and a variety of bacterial diseases that can cause sickness and, in some cases, death to people who consume contaminated food products. If you feel ill after coming in contact with or consuming feral swine, contact your physician.

Some Diseases Carried by Feral Swine

- ***Pseudorabies***
- ***Brucellosis***
- ***Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome***
- ***Swine influenza***
- ***Toxoplasmosis***
- ***Tularemia***
- ***Trichinellosis***

Pseudorabies can be transmitted from feral swine to some pets, such as dogs and cats, as well as cattle, sheep, and goats. Signs of illness include intense itching often followed by paralysis and death. Contact your veterinarian if your pets or livestock come in contact with feral swine and show any of the following clinical signs:

- *Sudden change in behavior*
- *Excessive salivation*
- *Difficulty breathing*
- *Fever*
- *Vomiting*
- *Depression/reluctance to move*
- *Difficult walking/poor coordination*
- *Convulsions*
- *Intense itching or self mutilation*
- *Coma*
- *Sudden death*