

Toolkit for Reducing the Spread of Wild Hogs
In
States with Small or Non-existent Populations
Version 2, August 2020



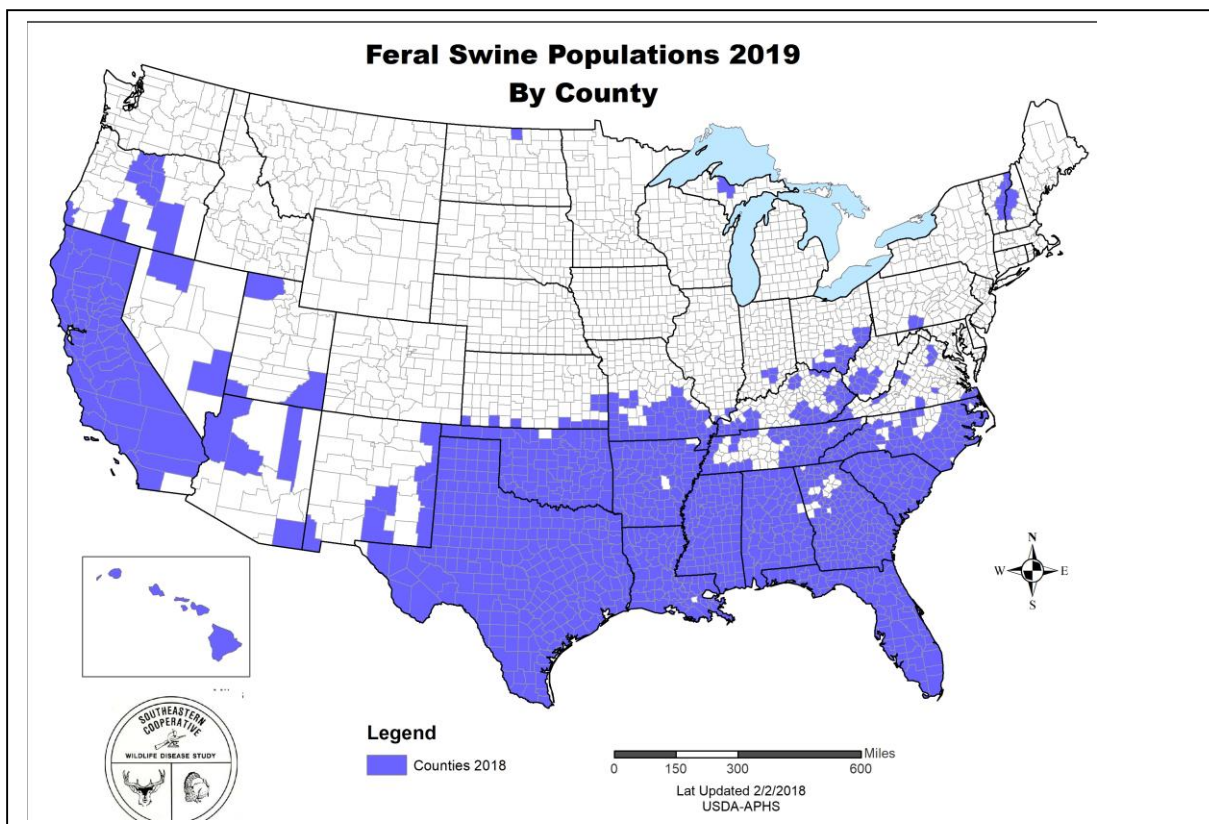
Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Wild Hog Working Group

Introduction

Wild hogs, also referred to as feral swine, are an invasive, exotic species that pose a serious threat to North America's natural resources. Their rooting and feeding behavior contributes to soil erosion, reduced water quality, and damage to agricultural lands including cropland, pasture, and hayfields. The reproductive rate, omnivorous appetite and destructive feeding behavior of wild hogs make them a direct threat to our native plant and animal populations, including game animals as well as threatened and endangered species. The spread of disease by wild hogs is another major concern and there is potential for these diseases to jeopardize people, pets, wildlife, and livestock, including the domestic pork industry. Our definition of a wild hog is any hog swine (*Sus scrofa*) that has lived any portion of its life outside of confinement.

Historically hogs were introduced in many states and remained in isolated areas for decades. However, over the past 20 years with the increase in sport hunting interest (primarily dog hunting) hog populations have spread significantly due to translocation. Wild hogs are extremely adaptable and can live in and exploit any eco-region in North America. Therefore, aggressive efforts are needed to eliminate introduction, arrest range expansion, and eradicate existing wild hog populations where feasible. States with newly established populations should be particularly proactive while eradication is a viable option. It is critical to implement control efforts immediately since delaying the response will increase future cost and manpower demands.

This document was prepared by the Wild Hog Working Group of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to serve as a template for the implementation of wild hog eradication programs for state wildlife agencies with existing or emerging populations. The implementation of these steps is particularly important for states that currently do not have wild hog populations.



Step 1: Develop an inter-agency task force

Effective wild hog control will require collaboration between various organizations that are affected by wild hogs. These organizations will work together to carry out each of the following steps within this document. It is imperative to collaborate in order to make necessary changes because wild hogs may be regulated by multiple agencies. These organizations should work together to identify and secure all available funding for wild hog management efforts.

Examples of partner organizations will include but are not limited to the following:

State agencies: wildlife agency, department of agriculture, health and hospitals, forestry, parks, department of natural resources, judicial branches of government, environmental agencies, association of county officials, and Extension.

Federal agencies: USDA Vet Services, USDA Wildlife Services, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, National Parks Service, US Geological Service, Army Corps of Engineers, and NRCS.

Local governments: Levee boards, homeowners associations and soil and water conservation districts.

Non-government organizations: Farm Bureau, Pork Producers, Cattlemen's Association, Dairy Association, Wildlife Federations, hunting organizations, timber producers, landowner associations, conservation organizations, and agricultural commodity boards.



Step 2: Increase public understanding of wild hog issues

Common information needs include: 1) commodity-specific agricultural economic damage estimates and costs of hog control efforts, 2) environmental impacts, 3) disease transmission to humans, domestic livestock, and wildlife, 4) impacts to wildlife including resource competition, predation, and habitat degradation, 5) effective and ineffective hog control methods, emphasizing that hunting is not an effective control method.

Generation and dissemination of these assessments are crucial for public support and to justify legislative and regulatory changes.

Step 3: Increase regulatory mechanisms and enforcement capability to control illegal transport and release of wild hogs

Transport and relocation of wild hogs is the primary means by which populations are established in new areas. Thus, state agencies should strive to make the possession, transport, and sale of live wild hogs illegal. Free-ranging domestic hogs should not be allowed and domestic "backyard" hog operations should be permitted by state departments of agriculture. Lastly, a single regulatory agency should be responsible for the take and transport of wild hogs.

Suggested legislation verbiage to help curtail unwanted translocation of feral hogs is listed below:

- (a) It is not the intent of this section to impede the legal transportation of domestic swine.**
- (b) As used in this section, "wild hog" means any swine that has lived any portion of its life outside of confinement.**
- (c) It is an offense to possess, transport, and import live wild hogs.**
- (d) It is an offense to intentionally release any swine into the wild.**
- (e) Any law enforcement officer, any conservation agent, or any enforcement agents of the state department of agriculture are authorized to enforce the provisions of this section.**
- (f) A violation of subsections (c) and (d) is a Class A misdemeanor. Each wild hog in possession constitutes a separate offense. (Stiffer penalties can be considered on a state by state basis.)**

Step 4: Statewide elimination of sport hog hunting

Sport hunting is not an effective control method for wild hogs; rather, it has been shown to be the likely mechanism for the establishment and spread of hog populations for the purpose of sport hunting. Wild hogs should be classified as an exotic nuisance species, rather than big game. Additionally, hog hunting/shooting preserves should be illegal. Elimination of all economic and sporting incentives for the pursuit of wild hogs is imperative for the success of this program in each state. This action reduces the motivation to stock, transport or perpetuate hog populations for the purpose of hunting.

Step 5: Enable landowners and land managers to control wild hogs

Enable public and private landowners to perform lethal wild hog control including but not limited to trapping, day and night shooting over bait, and aerial gunning.

Eradication of localized wild hog populations must be aggressive, continuous, and simultaneous on public and private lands. In the absence of aggressive and coordinated effort, wild hogs will simply take refuge on untreated state, federal, or private lands and re-populate adjacent areas when eradication efforts cease. It is important to note that wild hog control and eradication methods must be adaptive as more is learned of the behavior and dynamics of wild hog populations as well as the efficiency of control efforts.