

Kansas Feral Swine Control Program

United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Wildlife Services

January 09, 2011

John Johnson
Wildlife Biologist



Feral hogs or "wild boars" come from several sources and include released or escaped domestic swine and the truly wild European boar. When free-roaming in North America, all are included in the term "feral swine," as are all hybrids of the two types. Although morphologically distinct, all swine, whether it be feral hogs, European wild swine or domestic swine are recognized as *Sus scrofa*. The physical damage caused by feral swine has been well documented and includes damage to vehicles, vineyards, tree plantings, archaeological sites, agricultural crops, turf, soils, rare plant communities, wildlife, and wildlife habitat. In addition they compete with livestock and native wildlife for food resources, prey on domestic animals and wildlife, and carry diseases that affect pets, livestock, wildlife and people. Texas, the state with the largest feral hog population, reports the annual damage to agriculture at \$51.8 million. The total damage caused by feral swine in the United States is estimated to be approximately \$800 million annually. This estimate is approximate, and probably conservative, because environmental damage costs attributable to feral swine are not easily quantified nor are the costs of potential disease outbreaks.

Kansas received its first reports of feral swine in 1994 on the Fort Riley Military Reserve. The public was encouraged to hunt them, and Wildlife Service's was asked to remove them with trapping and aerial gunning. Over a five year period 385 feral swine were removed from the area, with only 15 being killed by public hunting, and the remainder removed by WS.

It was in the fall of 2000 that reports of other feral swine started coming in from various areas across the state. At the time there were no laws or regulations in dealing with feral swine. During 2000-2006 WS continued to monitor Fort Riley Military Installation to see if any additional feral hog sign could be found. Any reported sightings were investigated and on one occasion a track from a single hog was verified. During the period WS monitored news reports of feral swine occurring in other parts of the state. These reports or news articles were passed along to the Kansas Animal Health Department Livestock Commissioner. WS personnel met on several occasions with Kansas Animal Health Department, Kansas Pork Association, and APHIS Veterinary Services to discuss the rapid expansion of feral swine populations in states like Oklahoma and Texas and express our concerns that without an organized control program Kansas would suffer the same fate.

In 2004 an Oklahoma based domestic swine producer indicated that his herd had become infected with Porcine Reproductive & Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). The farm was located about 1/2 mile from the Kansas border. They indicated feral swine had been around their building on several occasions and suspected that the PRRS may have originated from them. The swine were living in both Oklahoma and Kansas. A joint effort between Oklahoma and Kansas WS resulted in the removal of 14 feral swine from Kansas.

In 2005 an inter-agency meeting was held with personnel from KAHD, KDWP, APHIS VS and WS. WS put forth a management plan calling for 3 people to work full time across Kansas as well as a sufficient aerial hunting budget. This plan was ultimately funded

Appropriations Committee

Date March 14, 15/16

Attachment 4-2

in 2006 at reduced levels. Also during 2005 WS began investigating and verifying reported feral swine populations. Previously much of the reported information had not been verified and relied on eye witness accounts.

Kansas WS, after intense study of the issue decided to push for a radical and different approach. WS wanted to make it illegal in the state of Kansas to hunt feral pigs. At first glance this seems a contradictory reaction to the problem. Feral swine throughout their history in the United States seem to follow a distinct domino pattern. Once an area or county is infected with feral swine, within a short amount of time the neighboring counties have them and on and on it goes. If public hunting works in eliminating a population, why was this pattern continued? We deduced that open hunting has the exact opposite effect that conventional thinking would lead to.

First, one needs to examine the mental capacity of the pig. It has been well documented that the pig (*Sus scrofa*), is third, following the Bottel-nosed Dolphin (*Tursiops truncates*), and the Common Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) in mental capacity and learning ability. Pigs are true omnivores, able to forage very successfully in an astonishing variety of habitats. With very little pressure, they become completely nocturnal. With a little more pressure they will vacate the area and move into adjacent areas where they receive less pressure. So to break down the feral pig problem, here are the facts: You have a very mobile, highly reproductive, expert forager, with zero natural predators that is arguably smarter than most of the humans perusing it. Its ability to adapt to any environment or ecosystem, and the ability to change its habits to its environment make it a highly prized game animal. Therein lays the problem. You have an animal that people want to hunt, but have a very low success rate of actually taking the animal in sufficient numbers to control the overall population. Anytime one puts a value on an animal, in this case "They are fun to hunt"; there is no incentive to get rid of that value, whether it be intrinsic, monetary, or simply recreational. The people who do not have access to them will want access. So they go to Oklahoma or Texas and buy a trailer load of them for fifty bucks and haul them back. This is the prominent reason feral swine have become such an epidemic across the US. With the help of Kansas Animal Health Department, Kansas Pork Association and APHIS Veterinary Services; legislation was passed under article 47-1809 to prohibit transportation, release, and sport hunting of feral swine.

Now, five years later a good comparison can be shown when comparing the states of Kansas and Missouri. Kansas and Missouri both discovered feral swine at about the same time period. Missouri decided to follow in the traditional control method of open hunting to eliminate its recently discovered populations, while Kansas made it illegal to hunt them. As of January 2011, Missouri has an estimated 10,000 plus feral swine across their state. Kansas has less than 500. In Missouri the control methods are as follows: open public hunting, private trappers, The Missouri Department of Conservation, The Missouri Department of Agriculture, and Wildlife Services. All state and federal agencies conduct trapping and other control methods. In Kansas you have Wildlife Services Feral Swine Control Program, which consist of two individuals working across the entire state. The difference is allowing the public to hunt feral swine.

Appropriations Committee

Date, March 14, 15, 16

Attachment 4-3

We are currently working on ten separate established populations across the state:

-We are fairly confident four populations (Clinton Wildlife Area, Douglas Co., Lake City Population, Barber Co., Rantoul Population, Miami Co., and Philipsburg Population, Phillips Co.,) are all but eradicated. Continued surveillance will be necessary before conformation can be achieved.

-Four Populations WS would label as maintenance populations, meaning there is an ongoing and continuous mobilization and immigration of feral hogs naturally out of Oklahoma (Cimarron National Grasslands; Morton Co., Ashland Population; Clark Co., Kaw Wildlife Area; Cowley Co., and Coffeyville Population; Montgomery Co.). We pretty much have them beat back to the state line, but if we turn our backs, we will be right back where we started.

-A single population (Louisburg Population, Miami Co.), I would also label as a maintenance population, since the feral hogs are migrating naturally out of Missouri. The difference there being I am fairly confident this is a small and local population that has been pressured out of Missouri into Kansas, and hopefully they will be eradicated in a timely fashion.

-The last population is Bourbon Co. This is the most firmly established population. There are many problems in this area. This area is the only place in the entire state where we have landowners who actually want the feral swine on their property. A couple of these landowners are currently conducting illegal hog hunting operations. They continue to supplement the heard with monthly introductions from released pigs coming from Texas. We feel this population is at a stagnant trend. We have reduced the numbers to a level that is self sustaining. Meaning we are not gaining on it anymore. Every twenty hogs removed are replaced by either a new introduction or coming off the sanctuaries where WS do not have permission to go into. We do not see this trend changing with the parameters we are currently working under. WS has significantly reduced the feral swine damage to those cooperators who welcomed our help, but we are not close to eliminating all damage.

We also continue to monitor and conduct control work on newly dumped feral swine.

Example: Last year a ten feral swine were intentionally released in southern Barber Co. near the town of Hardtner. We have been able to remove thirty pigs from the area and are currently tracking down and trying to remove the remaining 4 or 5 pigs.

It is my opinion that Kansas has a population of 400-500 feral swine remaining across the state. This number is intentionally high, as I am confident there are 100-150 feral swine that are flying under the radar, and have yet to be confirmed.

The Feral Hog Control Program since its inception in 2006 has been responsible for removing 2,011 feral swine from the state of Kansas. To put it into perspective, without changing any of the other parameters (no sport hunting, no illegal release, act.): if Wildlife Services had not removed these 2,011 feral swine, Kansa's wild hog populations could

Appropriations Committee

Date MARCH 14, 15, 16

Attachment 4-4

easily be in the tens of thousands. Since 2006 WS has documented 3.17 million dollars worth of agricultural damage.

We are currently working with 529 private and public co-operators on ground exceeding some 330,000 acres. Our co-operators could not be happier with the success of the program. All involved are extremely satisfied with the performance of our eradication efforts. If we can continue to improve and tweak some of the small problems, I have every confidence Kansas will continue to be the model for every other state being inundated with their own feral hog problems.

Thank you for your time, and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

John D. Johnson
Wildlife Biologist
USDA-APHIS-WS
jonathan.d.johnson@aphis.usda.gov
620-215-5301

Appropriations Committee
Date March 14, 15, 16
Attachment 4-5

Kansas Feral Swine Map

January 31, 2011

A. Morton Co.--

45- Feral Swine Removed from Kansas

102 - Feral Swine Removed from Colorado Side

This nomadic group of feral swine, seems to move into Kansas during the early spring and spend the majority of their time in the river bottom of the Cimarron. Most of this stretch of the river is in the Cimarron National Grasslands. For the past three years WS has worked in conjunction with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Wildlife Services and the National Forrest Service in a joint effort to remove the feral pigs from the area. There are currently 30-40 pigs on the entire stretch of the river from Kansas into Colorado and down to Oklahoma.

B. Grant Co.—

0 - Feral Swine Removed

This penned group of feral swine is located just a few miles outside of the town of Ulysses. There are 15-20 adult feral swine inside of an enclosure measuring 30 feet in diameter. WS confirmed that at least two escapees have been killed within five miles of the enclosure. An in-depth criminal investigation needs to be conducted.

C. Meade Co. -

12—Feral Swine Removed

This population started of inside of a 640 acre high fence hunting area. The pigs were illegally stocked from population D.. The pigs were able to easily escape despite the high fence and one strand hot wire around the bottom. There was much damage documented to surrounding farmers as far away as five miles. These pigs also came into contact with a commercial hog farm 4 ½ miles to the west. Surveillance continues but WS has not removed a pig from the area in 18 months.

Appropriations Committee

Date March 14, 15/16

Attachment 4-6

D. Ford Co.—

0 - Feral Swine Removed

This illegal operation came to our attention 24 months ago. An individual has approximately 85-110 feral swine in a five acre enclosure. The swine range from new born to 400 pound adults. These feral swine range in color from light gray to dark brown, all have a more Eurasian Boar look to them than other feral swine across the state, excluding population C. In the middle of the enclosure is a trap pen where the individual baits the pigs into, captures and then relocates the pigs to parts unknown. The individual has a public website where he advertises his feral hog hunts.

E. Clark Co.

110 - Feral Swine Removed

This population seems to keep trickling up the Cimarron River out of Oklahoma. Currently there are but a handful on the Kansas side of the border. Maintenance will be necessary to keep numbers in check.

F. Barber, Comanche and Pratt Co.

643 - Feral Swine Removed

WS has concluded that this is the only population in the state that is a result from escaped or turned out domestic hogs. WS believes that when the pork market tanked twelve to fifteen years ago, a farmer just turned the pigs loose. All pigs taken in the past four years have near identical physiological traits, confirming a rather small initial gene pool. WS believes that there is less than 30 remaining feral swine across this huge area.

G. Cowley Co.

178 - Feral Swine Removed

This area consists of feral pigs migrating up the Arkansas River out of Oklahoma. There is a constant movement of new sounder groups moving

Appropriations Committee

Date March 14, 15, 16

Attachment 4-2

into the KAW Wildlife Area due to hunting pressure south of the border in Oklahoma. Constant maintenance is required. 40-60 feral swine remaining.

H. Montgomery Co.

24 – Feral Swine Removed

Once again this population is steadily increasing due to migration out of Oklahoma. Maintenance must be applied. 30-40 feral swine remaining.

I. Bourbon Co.

538 – Feral Swine Removed

This population started about ten years ago from a individual releasing feral pigs from Texas. This same individual continues to illegally release feral pigs from Texas on a monthly basis. He, along with a handful of other landowners in the area, also manages an illegal hunting operation that can also be found on the internet. The land controlled by this group consists of 5,000 acres of heavily timbered cover. These large sanctuaries make total eradication un-achievable. Enforcement of the current statutes must be applied, if control of illegal release is to be stopped. There are a remaining 150-175 feral swine.

J. Miami Co.

205 – Feral Swine Removed

Rantoul. This population started from illegal release of feral swine. WS has not found sign or tracks from feral swine here in 16 months.

K. Miami Co.

54 – Feral Swine Removed

Louisburg. This population continues to grow from immigration out of Missouri. There are 100-120 feral swine remaining.

Appropriations Committee
Date March 14, 15, 16
Attachment 4-8

L. Douglas Co.

210 - Feral Swine Removed

This population started from illegal release onto the Clinton Wildlife Area. WS has not found any sign in 24 months.

M. Seward Co.

0 - Feral Swine Removed

This is currently the newest population discovered by WS. There are at least 25-30 feral swine on this short stretch of the Cimarron River. These feral swine are probably immigrating north out of Oklahoma.

N. Phillips Co.

27 - Feral Swine Removed Kansas Side

108 - Feral Swine Removed Nebraska Side

This is another illegal dump population. We have had no reports since 2009 of any remaining feral swine.

Appropriations Committee

Date March 14, 15, 16

Attachment 4-9



Appropriations Committee
Date March 14, 15, 16
Attachment 4-16