Feral Swine Update

July 2020

Feral Swine Population

Glen Gentry, Ph.D.
LSU AgCenter

Feral swine are not native to North America. It is thought that these animals were brought in during the 1500's as a food source for explorers. The pigs released into the wild by explorers, pigs managed "at-large" and escapes from domestic swine farms all played a role in seeding the landscape with feral swine.

Over the last couple of decades, the feral swine population has exploded, this drastic increase is due to several reasons. First, pigs are very adaptive and can live in almost every environment, they are also omnivorous, meaning they will eat just about anything containing a calorie (plant or animal) and their reproductive rate is very high. Because of these aspects and the transportation of feral swine by humans, as of June 2020, the USDA states that feral swine have been reported in 35 states and the population within the US is over 6 million (Figure 1). In Louisiana, it is estimated that there are over 700,000 pigs, which works out to about 13 pigs per square mile, up from 10 pigs per square mile a few years ago. ❋

Population continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

LDWF Update

Jim LaCour, DVM
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries

Feral swine (Sus scrofa) also known as feral hogs, piney woods rooters, and wild boar are not native to North America. They are considered an invasive species and are classified by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries as "outlaw quadrupeds." Feral swine have been sighted in all 64 parishes in Louisiana and their population is estimated to be in excess of 700,000 animals.

Feral swine reach sexual maturity before one year of age and some have been documented to be reproductively active as young as 6 months of age. Their gestation period is 114 days (3 months, 3 weeks, 3 days) and they average 6 piglets per litter. They can have 2 litters per year. Feral swine cycle year-round but research in Louisiana has shown peak breeding occurs around January 1 and July 1.

People in possession of a Louisiana Basic Hunting License can shoot feral swine year-round on private property during daylight hours with no restrictions on limit, firearm caliber, or magazine capacity. They can also use cage or corral traps to catch and dispatch feral swine. Enclosed traps must have an opening in the top 22 x22 inches square or 25 inches in diameter if round to allow the escape of turkeys and bear. Individuals who desire to snare feral swine must possess a Louisiana Trapping License.

During the 2020 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, laws were modified to allow year-round nighttime shooting of feral swine on private property without permit. People engaged in shooting feral swine at night on private property have to notify the parish sheriff within 24 hours prior to hunting OR immediately upon nighttime harvest of feral swine. Also during the

LDWF continued on page 3

Population continued from page 1

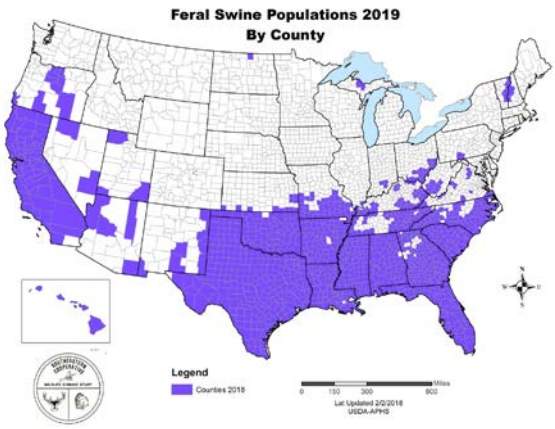

Figure 1. Feral Swine Population Locations 2019

Legal Control Methods

Current methods that are legal to utilize for the control of feral swine include: daytime shooting, Juda pig, box trapping, corral trapping, snaring, drop netting and aerial gunning. None of these methods are considered effective in the long term but can be used as a stop-gap short-term solution to reduce pig numbers in an area. Below are results from trapping that show how effective the use of corral traps can be.

Over the course of several years, the Bob R Jones Idlewild Research Station operated a trap loaner program. This program offered cellular controlled corral traps that were purchased on a Louisiana Soybean and Grain Research and Promotion Board grant to stakeholders that could show pig damage was severely impacting agronomics on their farm. Over the course of this grant we reached 66 stakeholders and removed over 440 pigs from the landscape. For a stakeholder to receive a trap, AgCenter personnel would travel to the stakeholder's farm and assess for feral swine damage, if damage was present a camera was set up to monitor the property to determine the number of pigs present. If the number was sufficient then the trap was set up in stages to capture and remove the pigs.

We only achieved a 59% trapping success. Meaning once pigs were identified by camera and trap building ensued, about 40% of the time the pigs left the area due to the changes in the landscape. On average, we caught 11 pigs per successful capture. Seventy-five percent of the pigs caught were juveniles, 16% were sows and 9% were boars.

These results show that just because pigs are present on an area, the odds of trapping them are not that great. Over the course of time, very few adult animals were captured compared with juveniles.

Kaput Feral Hog Bait

In 2017, the EPA approved the use of Kaput Feral Hog Bait for use in the US. Kaput uses Warfarin as its toxicant and a blue dye that settles in the fat of a pig that consumes the bait. The blue dye was added to aid in the identification of pigs that have consumed the bait to alert hunters that the meat should not be consumed. To date, Louisiana has not approved the use of Kaput for feral hog control. Below is information of interest from the Kaput Feral Hog Bait Label.

1. This bait may only be applied in hog feeders equipped with heavy lids (8 to 10 lbs. of total weight) on bait compartments so as to limit direct access to bait by nontarget animals.
2. Grazing Restriction: Do not allow livestock to graze on baited areas (whether fenced or open) during the baiting program. If bait is to be applied in areas used for grazing, ensure that all livestock are removed and excluded from baited areas before applying this product and for at least 90 days after toxic baits are removed from bait dispensers.
3. From one to three bait feeders may be used per placement location
4. Provide access to non-toxic feed for three to six weeks, until hogs are feeding readily from the bait compartments
5. After feral hogs have been conditioned to take non-toxic feed from bait compartments, remove all of the non-toxic feed remaining in the feeders and replace with Kaput Feral Hog Bait.
6. Dead hogs may begin to appear in or near the treatment areas within 4 to 7 days after bait placement. Applicators must return to the treatment site within 4 days after the first bait placements were made, and at 2- to 4-day intervals thereafter, to inspect the site for evidence of dead or dying feral hogs and/or dead nontarget

Kaput continued on page 3

Kaput continued from page 2

animals. All carcasses found must be disposed of properly.

7. Continue to monitor the treatment area to collect and dispose of feral hogs and to search for non-target animals for at least two weeks after the removal of all bait from the hog feeders. Deaths of any animals other than feral hogs that appear to be the result of baiting with this product must be reported to State authorities.
8. Note: A dye in this product will impart a blue color to the fatty tissues of hogs that have eaten the bait.

The AgCenter is currently conducting trials on its own feral hog lethal bait and delivery system. Findings from these studies and others will be included in the January issue.❋

LDWF continued from page 1

legislative session, a law was passed protecting people which donate feral pork to food banks from any liability associated with disease transmission from that meat.

On public lands including state-owned Wildlife Management Areas and federal lands which abide by LDWF rules, feral swine may only be hunted during concurrent hunting seasons with gear appropriate for that season. For example, during squirrel season a licensed hunter may utilize a rimfire rifle or shotgun with small shot to kill pigs. During archery season they may use a bow or crossbow. During the firearms season for deer they can use a centerfire rifle or shotgun with buckshot or slugs. There are a few special feral swine seasons on specific WMA's. These can be found in the pamphlet referenced below.

Hunters pursuing feral swine on any land during the open firearms season for deer must wear hunter-orange or blaze pink for their safety.

More information on feral swine is available in the 2019-2020 LDWF Hunting Regulations pamphlet on pages 49, 75, and 76. The pamphlet is available at sporting goods stores, LDWF offices, or online at https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/assets/Resources/Publications/Regulations/2019-2020_Hunting_Regs_low_res.pdf

Feral swine carry a myriad of diseases, some of which are zoonotic and communicable to people. These diseases include but are not limited to Swine Brucellosis, Leptospirosis, Trichinosis, and Toxoplasmosis. These diseases can infect people thru different pathways including entering thru cuts, contact of bodily fluids with mucous membranes of the eyes and mouth, and ingestion. To ensure the safety of people that hunt, butcher, and or consume feral pork we recommend the following:

1) Keep the harvested animal cool and butcher it as soon as possible to avoid spoilage.

2) Never eat, drink, or use tobacco products while handling or processing feral swine.

3) Wear latex or nitrile gloves and protective eyewear.

4) Clean all coolers, knives, cutting boards etc. with hot soapy water and 10% or greater bleach solution.

5) Cook feral pork to an internal temperature of 165° F.

Adhering to these basic rules will greatly reduce the likelihood of someone becoming ill from handling or consuming feral pork. ❋

Traps Available for Lease

The LSU AgCenter leases traps at cost to stakeholders wishing to catch and dispatch feral swine on their property.

Traps are available for 3 months at a time and the cost is $150 per month. This includes corral trap, gate, camera and batteries. We have Jager Pro, Wireless and Boar Buster systems. All systems utilize cellular technology which is included in the lease.. You will be responsible for pick-up and return.

For more information contact:

Ariel Bourgoyne
Bob R Jones Idlewild Research Station
Clinton, LA 70722
225-683-5848
abourgoyne@agcenter.lsu.edu

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Glen Gentry, Ph.D.
Resident Director Central and Bob R Jones Idlewild Research Stations and Feral Swine Specialist
Phone: 225-683-5848
Email: ggentry@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Dr. Jim LaCour, DVM
LDWF State Wildlife Veterinarian
Phone: 225-765-0823
Email: jlacour@wlf.la.gov

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Toxicants

Encapsulation of Toxicants

Lethality of Toxicants

Research Updates

LSU AgCenter
Research & Extension

For the latest research-based information on just about anything, visit our website at:

www.LSUAgCenter.com

@LSUAgCenter