

Texas Feral Hog Abatement Pilot Project

Texas Department of Agriculture is funding a pilot project through the Texas Cooperative Extension to study and measure the economic impact of managing feral hogs within agricultural enterprises. The project is designed to cover three different ecoregions within Texas: Blackland Prairie, Postoak Savannah/Piney Woods, and Coastal Prairie. Within these ecoregions three sites have been chosen to run the study: Hill/Navarro Counties, Camp/Titus Counties and Matagorda County, respectively. Extension's Wildlife and Fisheries Unit and Wildlife Services are working together in this effort. In addition, assistance is provided from Extension's Agricultural Economics unit in developing an agricultural producer/landowner survey to determine the economic value of previous feral hog damage and evidence of change in that damage following the project's management efforts.

This is a pilot project to determine the economic effectiveness of feral hog management and not a feral hog eradication program. Cooperating producers/landowners will be selected by the respective local Extension personnel. There will not be a signup list to receive assistance in removing feral hogs from any and all properties within the study area.

Education is a primary function of this project. All landowners across the state will benefit from this project through the educational efforts keeping everyone informed of the project's progress and successful feral hog management procedures. Much of that information will be available on this website.

Larger traps represent a better opportunity to catch the most hogs at one time as compared to the smaller box traps that can only hold a few hogs or may be avoided altogether by some “trap-wise” hogs. Do not re-release hogs that are trapped as this just causes problems for other landowners. In fact, it is illegal to capture and re-release hogs without having them screened by a veterinarian for brucellosis and pseudorabies. Contact your local Texas Animal Health Commission for more info on that regulation.

1. Trap design: Using sheep and goat panels (4" x 4" squares 5' high) or similar materials, setup the trap in the area where damage is occurring. The trap should be supported at regular intervals (every 4 feet) by t-posts or other similar material and should not have gaps along the bottom where hogs might escape. This design is still portable as the entire trap can be dis-assembled and moved to another area on a flatbed trailer if no hog activity is detected. Set the trap in a “tear drop” shape where the gate is located in the narrow or funnel area (See pictures). This will help funnel the hogs towards a trailer backed up to the gate for loading. Avoid having “hard” corners in the trap design as hogs will tend to pile into that corner and may go over the top. The area inside the trap does not have to be all short grass. It’s okay to have some brush or grass inside the trap and may help camouflage the trap itself and make the hogs less wary. It is important that the hogs have enough room to move away from you as you approach the trap to prevent them from panicking.



2. Trap doors: Doors can either be saloon doors as pictured or hinged at the top. With either design, the door must be wide enough (32" to 36" total opening width) for hogs to pass through without tripping and closing the door when they first enter the trap. In the doors shown, a hinged wooden prop with an eyebolt on the side facing the trigger) is placed between the doors that is attached to the gate frame with springs. They open into the trap but will slam shut due to the springs. It is important to brace the doors at the top and bottom so they cannot be forced open from the inside. A wire is run from the prop to an area of the trap

furthest from the door opening. Bait is placed in a hole and the wire is stretched over that hole at ground level. Note the series of t-posts running away from the gate toward the back of the trap. Baling wire is wrapped around each post to form an eye (like on a fishhook) and the guy wire is threaded through each eye as the wire descends away from the gate back to the hole where it reaches ground level. As the hogs root in the hole filled with bait, the wire is stretched and the prop is pulled out from between the gate doors and remains closed due to the springs on each door. Additional hogs can push in, but none can exit.



A single door works the same way, but is hinged along the top and propped open by an “L” placed into the end of a pipe that has been driven into the ground at a distance inside the trap that allows the door to be opened and propped up parallel to the ground. The trip wire is attached to the leg of the “L” that is not placed in the end of the pipe. When it is moved by hogs rooting at the bait hole, it no longer supports the weight of the door and gravity causes the hinged door to swing down and close. Again, more hogs can push in, but the door should completely close behind them. Anything that a hog can get its snout under, through or between represents an opportunity for escape.

3. Baiting: Pre-baiting is important to get the hogs used to going into the trap. Start by feeding outside and through the gate opening. Pre-bait at least for a week after hogs have been entering the trap. Once you are ready to set the trap, bait all the way back to the trigger but do not scatter bait directly along the trip wire as this may cause the hogs to trigger the gate before they reach the bait hole and all hogs present may not be captured. Spread the bait back toward the bait hole but not right along the t-posts/guy wire. If hogs will come to shelled corn, that is probably the easiest bait to use. However, if acorns are abundant, trapping success may be limited. Fermented corn and old grease both appeal to the hog’s sense of smell and may be better baits if shelled corn is not productive

4. Strategy: The key to success is having the hogs be able to enter without feeling the presence of the trap around them. In other words, bigger is better! A minimum size is probably 20' by 30' in the tear drop shape described. If there is a

large group of hogs present, this size should be increased accordingly. The larger the trap area, the further hogs can move away from humans and the less likely they will be to panic and force through, over or under the trap sides. The trap should be checked daily unless both water and shade are available inside the enclosure. The longer the hogs stay in the trap, the more likely they will figure out an escape route! Have several traps setup in the general area where the hogs are working and pre-bait with the gates on all traps locked open. Once sign indicating hog presence is located at one trap, then full baiting can begin to capture the hogs. These traps are portable enough that they can be moved fairly quickly if the hogs shift their movements to another location.

5. Removing hogs from the trap: If hogs are going to be sold to a processor, simply back a trailer up to the trap door, place a cross tie across the gate opening to prevent them from going underneath the trailer and circle wide around to the backside of the trap. The hogs will move away from you and funnel toward the trailer.