

MANAGEMENT METHODS

There are many strategies for managing feral hog populations including hunting, trapping, baiting, and exclusion from areas they are unwanted using non-lethal tools such as fencing. Lethal feral hog removal methods such as shooting and trapping are preferred by wildlife professionals because they are a more effective approach to population control. The use of multiple lethal and non-lethal management approaches may be necessary to reduce the population of feral hogs within a watershed while restricting access to sensitive areas, limiting damage and water quality degradation.

WHAT STRATEGIES WORK BEST TO REMOVE A GROUP OF FERAL HOGS?



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Photo by Dr. Billy Higginbotham.

For landowners, trapping is one of the most effective methods of removing feral hogs because an entire sounder (i.e., group of wild pigs) can potentially be captured at once (1,2). Higher capture rates are possible with remotely activated traps, but these are often more expensive. Large corral traps have been shown to be four times more effective than traditional mechanically triggered box traps, which only capture 1-3 feral hogs at a time (2). When corral traps are used, the sounder is conditioned prior to trapping using pre-baiting. Additional tools such as remote cameras are advantageous to support a high capture rate (1). Aerial shooting of feral hogs from helicopters is another highly effective population reduction strategy if done by experienced personnel on properties without dense groundcover where the animals can hide. Removal rates of 9-27 feral hogs per hour were achieved with aerial gunning in south Texas dependent on the population density and groundcover (3). This method can be costly compared to ground-based methods and requires large areas for the helicopters to operate safely. Trapping and hunting are often more practical on smaller or densely forested properties (4).

WHAT IF THERE IS ONLY ONE HOG CAUSING DAMAGE?

A single boar may travel through an area and cause damage to crops or landscaping. In this situation, a box trap or snare can be valid options. Snaring feral hogs is legal in Texas, but there is a greater risk of capturing nontarget native wildlife or domestic animals that should be considered. Shooting and hunting feral hogs with trained dogs are effective management strategies for targeting an individual feral hog since it is difficult to capture the entire sounder with these methods. The use of night vision, thermal optics, and firearm suppressors can improve hunting success (5).



EFFECTS OF REMOVAL STRATEGIES ON FERAL HOG BEHAVIOR

Feral hogs are highly intelligent and adaptable. They can adapt to periods of high hunting pressure by breeding earlier in the year and producing offspring faster. If helicopters are used to hunt feral hogs frequently, they will often seek and remain hidden in dense vegetation. Feral hogs can become educated and develop trap aversion behavior which frequently is the result of incomplete captures (e.g., not capturing the entire group in a single trapping effort). It can also occur when individuals learn how to escape traps, which is why it is important to ensure that the proper removal method is used based on the number and size of feral hogs that are being targeted (6).

NEED GUIDANCE?

The Texas A&M Natural Resource Institute provides technical guidance at no cost to Texas landowners that are seeking assistance with feral hogs on their property. A feral hog specialist will provide instructions and resources to landowners for a site-specific feral hog management plan. For more information about this program and who to contact visit <https://wildpigs.nri.tamu.edu/education/technical-site-visits/>.

1. Lewis, C., M. Berg, N. Dictson, J. Gallagher, M. McFarland, and J. Cathey. Corral Traps for Feral Hogs. Available at: <https://plumcreekwatershed.org/wp-content/uploads/Corral-Traps-for-Feral-Hogs.pdf>
 2. Williams, B. L., R. W. Holtfreter, S. S. Ditchkoff and J.B. Grand. (2010). Trap style influences wild pig behavior and trapping success. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 75(2):432-436.
 3. Campbell, T.A., D. Long, and B. Leland (2010). Feral Swine Behavior Relative to Aerial Gunning in Southern Texas. USDA National Wildlife Research Center - Staff Publications. 886. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/icwdm_usdanwrc/886.
 4. Gaskins, D. (2013). The Porkchopper: Aerial Hunting of Feral Hogs. Available: <http://wild-wonderings.blogspot.com/2013/11/the-porkchopper-aerial-hunting-of-feral.html> (Accessed 27 June 2023).
 5. Hamrick, B., M. Smith, C. Jaworowski, and B. Strickland. A Landowner's Guide for Wild Pig Management, Practical Methods for Wild Pig Control. Mississippi State University Extension Service & Alabama Cooperative Extension System.
 6. Helcel, J. (2018). The Effects of Abatement Efforts on Wild Pig Behavior. Available at <http://wild-wonderings.blogspot.com/2018/05/the-effects-of-abatement-efforts-on.html?q=feral+pig> (Accessed: 27 June 2023).

LAWS & REGULATIONS

If feral hogs are damaging personal property, a landowner does not need a hunting license because feral hogs are considered exotic livestock in Texas (1). However, a valid Texas hunting license is required if traps or snares are used, as these may impact native wildlife. A hunting license is also required if feral hogs are harvested for sport or food. Feral hogs can be hunted year-round and there is no limit to the number that can be removed. It is also legal to hunt feral hogs at night with spotlights or night vision, but it is best to notify your local game warden beforehand. Legal hunting methods and license requirements are specified in the *Outdoor Annual*, a yearly publication from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

HUNTING RESOURCES

- Texas Parks and Wildlife *Outdoor Annual*: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/>
- Hunting Licenses: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/regulations/outdoor-annual/licenses/hunting-licenses-and-permits/hunting-licenses>
- Chambers County Wardens & Offices: <https://tpwd.texas.gov/warden/warden-by-county.phtml?county=Chambers>
- Texas Wildlife Services, College Station District Supervisor: <https://agrillife.org/txwildlifeservices/who-to-contact/>

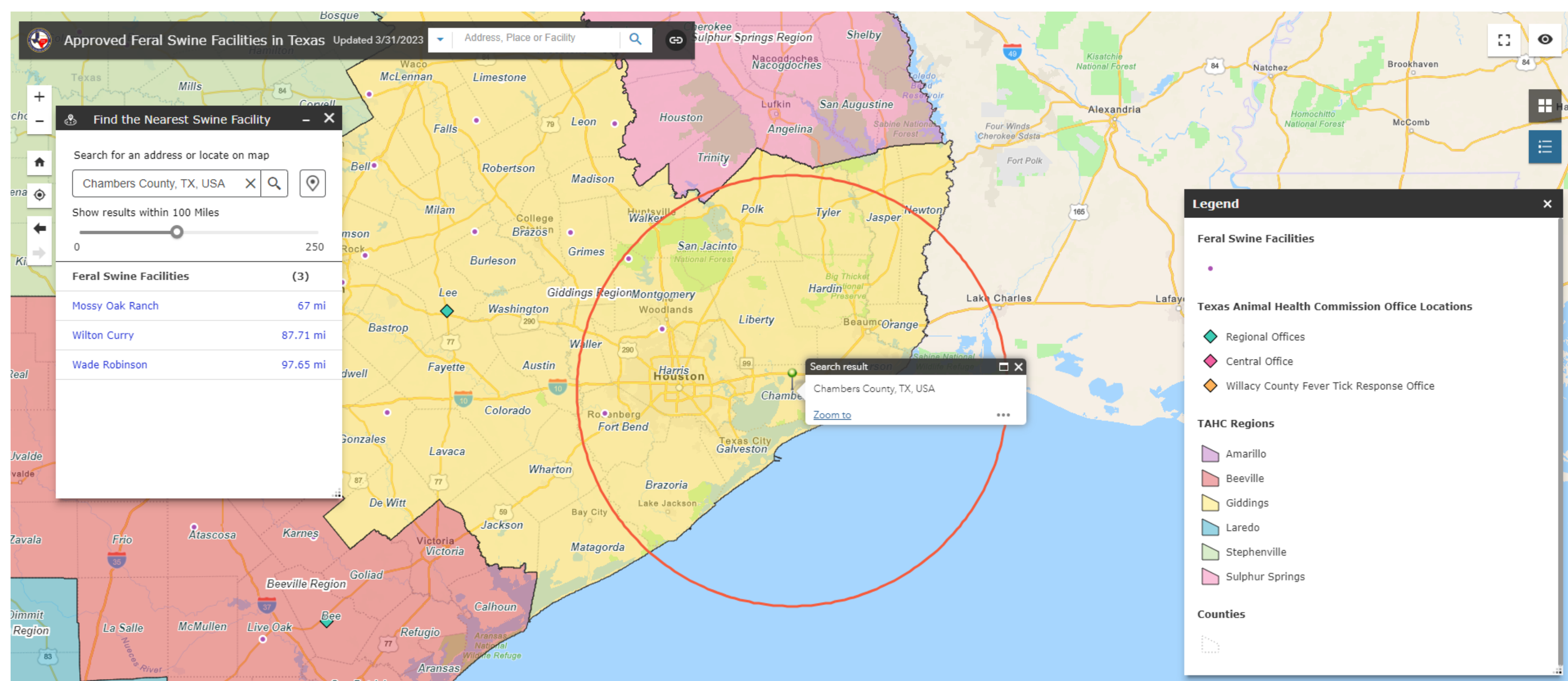
TRANSPORTATION OF LIVE FERAL HOGS

It is important to humanely transport and euthanize feral hogs shortly after they are captured. Once feral hogs are trapped, they may be transported to an approved temporary holding facility, where they stay before being moved to a recognized slaughter facility. The Texas Animal Health Commission, which regulates the movement of live feral hogs, prevents females from being transported and released onto another property. They can only be transported directly to slaughter or taken to an approved holding facility to be transported for slaughter. Male feral hogs can be sold to an approved holding facility, slaughter facility, or authorized hunting preserve (2).

NEED HELP LOCATING A FACILITY FOR FERAL HOGS?

Check out the Texas Animal Health Commission's Feral Swine Facilities tool:

<https://tahc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6406b01b5b284f2398c3117928869808>



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Feral Hog Research and Services: <https://feralhogs.tamu.edu/>
- Texas Wildlife Services - Feral Hog Resources: <https://agrillife.org/txwildlifeservices/species-information-and-publications/mammals/feral-hogs/>
- Texas A&M Natural Resource Institute Extension Publications: <https://wildpigs.nri.tamu.edu/resources/extension-publications/>
- Texas A&M Natural Resource Institute's Wild Wonderings Blog: <http://wild-wonderings.blogspot.com/?view=classic>

1. Texas Administrative Code, Title 4, Part 2, Chapter 36, Rule §36.1. Available at: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/operational-activities/feral-swine/sa-fs-history> (Accessed: 23 June 2023).
2. Texas Animal Health Commission. Available at: https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/swine/#feral (Accessed: 23 June 2023).

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