



Feral Hog Laws and Regulations in Texas

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Landowners in the Plum Creek Watershed of Hays, Caldwell, and Travis counties are frustrated with the destructive habits of feral hogs. Landowners want to know who owns feral hogs and when that person or agency will get rid of them. In the end, they may be surprised by the answer. Landowners own the feral hogs that occupy their property!

Feral hogs originated from domestic sources and were first introduced into the U.S. by early explorers and settlers as a food source. Subsequent escapes from holding pens or intentional releases resulted in a free-ranging population currently estimated to be between 1.9 and 3.4 million in Texas alone.

Feral hogs are not a game or non-game species in Texas. Instead, feral hogs are considered exotic livestock as described in Texas Parks and Wildlife Code Section 1.101(4) and Texas Agriculture Code 161.001(a) [4]. Because of this distinction, they fall under the ownership of the landowner and not the citizens of the state according to the Texas Agriculture Code Section 161.002.

Agricultural Damage by Hogs

According to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, feral hogs in Texas cause an estimated \$52 million dollars in damage to the agricultural industry annually (Figure 1). This figure does not account for damage in suburban areas or growing concerns over impacts to water quality, as in the Plum Creek Watershed.

Removal

Landowners or their agents are allowed to kill feral hogs on their property without a hunting license if feral hogs are causing damage. However, any landowner that plans to trap or snare hogs should have a valid Texas hunting license, since these activities could affect other wildlife species.



Figure 1. Damage to pasture from rooting by feral hogs.

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Figure 2. Feral hogs captured in a corral trap.



Figure 3. Feral hog captured in a box trap.

Hunting Requirements

For those who hunt feral hogs for trophy and/or food, a Texas hunting license is required. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) outlines license requirements and specific legal hunting methods in its annual hunting and fishing regulations publication, the Outdoor Annual. A hunting license permits the use of firearms, snaring and trapping (Figures 2 and 3).

Exotic species, including the feral hog, may be hunted throughout the year. Aerial gunning is allowed with a permit from the TPWD. There is no closed season and no bag limit. It is legal to use suppressors (silencers) on firearms to hunt feral hogs, but an Alcohol Tobacco Firearms Form 4 must be completed to purchase a suppressor. Feral hogs may be hunted at night with the use of a spotlight or night vision, but it is a good idea to provide

a courtesy call to your local game warden to let them know you will be hunting feral hogs.

Additional Information

To hone your knowledge of feral hogs and methods for their control, several publications were developed by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and can be downloaded at no charge by going to the Plum Creek Watershed Partnership website at <http://plumcreek.tamu.edu/feralhogs>.

This website also has an on-line tool which allows landowners and the general public to report feral hog sightings and control measures.

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Acknowledgement and disclaimer

Publication date: June 2011. This publication was developed with funding support from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through a Clean Water Act §319(h) Nonpoint Source grant administered by the Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board and from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Integrated Water Quality Program. The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination in all their programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914 in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture. Edward. G. Smith, Director, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M System.