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Corral Traps for Feral Hogs

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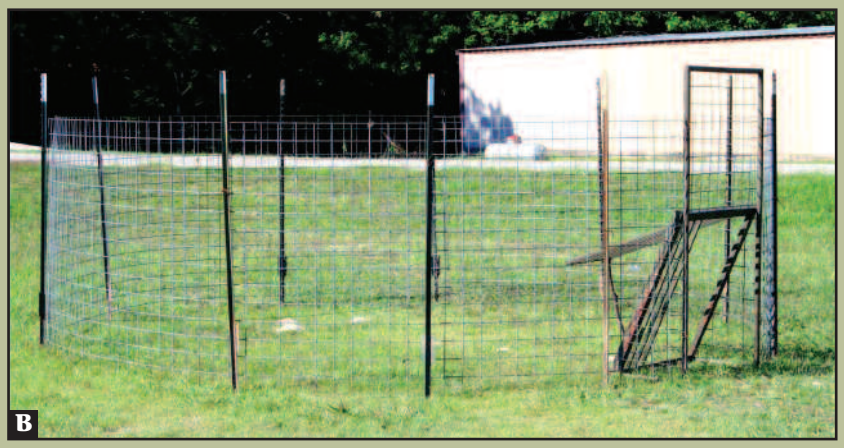
Expanding populations of feral hogs in Texas are damaging water quality, landscapes, gardens, native plant and animal communities, and agricultural production in many areas of the state. To reduce the harm caused by feral hogs, landowners and managers will need to adopt an integrated management approach using multiple techniques.

Most management efforts should include the use of large corral traps, which can be effective for reducing hog numbers quickly. Feral hogs typically travel in family groups called sounders, and a large corral trap can capture an entire group.

Figure 1



A large, teardrop-shaped corral trap can capture many hogs (A). Traps vary in size and shape, and occasionally a smaller round shape is preferred (B). *(Photo A source: Billy Higinbotham)*

Advantages

- Corral traps are effective for capturing large groups of hogs.
- If a deer is captured, the open trap allows it to escape.
- The traps can be placed in key areas that hogs will return to in the future.

Disadvantages

- The materials can be expensive and the construction time-consuming.
- Corral traps are not easily disassembled and moved. They are not portable as a unit.
- Pre-baiting can be expensive and time-consuming.

Trap designs

Most corral traps are made of 20- by 5-foot sheep/goat panels with 4- by 4-inch square mesh and steel T-posts. This type of panel prevents smaller pigs from escaping.

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Many door designs are available for corral traps. The best design for your situation depends on the amount of time available, the number of hogs present, the degree of labor required, and the cost of the materials.

Large sounders are seldom caught in small traps, and the hogs that escape or are not captured may become wary of them in the future. Although small traps do catch hogs of all sizes, they are not the most effective method for capturing many hogs. For these situations, a large teardrop-shaped trap is best. This design also serves as a chute for loading the hogs into a trailer (Fig. 1A).

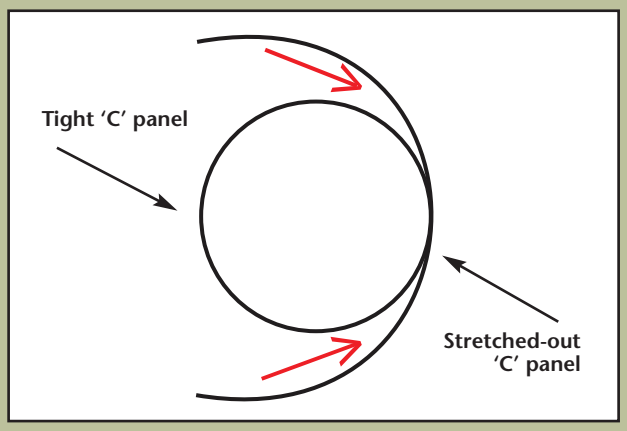
Corral traps are versatile, and their use can be adjusted according to the situation. Some designs do not require a gate or door (Fig. 2).

This trap consists of two panels, each at least 16 by 5 feet with 4- by 4-inch mesh, and eight T-posts. One panel forms the shape of a stretched "C". The other panel forms a tight "C" with the ends touching the stretched "C" panel.

T-posts are driven around the outside of the panels for extra support. A T-post should also be placed at each end where the panels touch, wired only at the top of the tight "C" panel. This configuration forms a chute on each side.

The trap interior and both chutes are baited. As the hogs try to get the bait inside the trap, they push in the bottom of the tight "C" panel, allowing access to the trap interior. Once inside, hogs find themselves in a circle and cannot push out of the entrance because of the resistance exerted by the outside panel.

Figure 2



Two panels and a minimum number of T-posts can be used to build a simple yet functional corral trap that does not require a gate.

This trap type is useful and extremely variable—it can be modified in many ways, including the figure-6 and heart-shaped or Wexford traps (Fig. 3)."

"Push-in" designs probably do not catch trap-shy animals very well. Loading pigs into a trailer is more difficult than using corral traps with head gates.

Trap design and construction

Design the trap large enough for hogs to back away as you approach the trap. The trap should not have corners because hogs tend to congregate in corners and may escape over the top of the panel. Support the trap every 4 feet by

Figure 3

Heart-shaped or Wexford trap. The number of T-posts used depends on the trap's size and configuration (A).

As hogs gather in the chute, they will push their way inside the trap (B).

T-posts and leave no gaps along the bottom that would allow the hogs to escape.

Materials needed

The trap in Figures 4 through 6 used these materials:

- Lifting head gate
- 13 T-posts, 6-foot
- 4 sheep/goat panels, 16 feet by 52 inches
- Roll of tie wire
- T-post driver
- Lineman's pliers or fencing tool
- Two-by-four, 4 feet long
- Hook and eye latch, 4-inch

Figure 4

Use steel T-posts to secure a head gate (A). Make sure the head gate fits snugly against the T-posts using a doubled strand of baling wire (B).

Steps for building a corral trap

1. Set the head gate. A lifting gate is shown in Figure 4. Most head gate/door designs are secured with steel T-posts on each side of the entrance and attached to the gate with doubled bailing wire to provide additional strength. When driving T-posts, be sure they fit securely against the side of the head gate.
2. Use the panels to shape the trap. The trap size and shape and the number of T-posts depend on the number of panels used and the location of the trap.
3. Secure the panels to the head gate T-posts with doubled wire (Fig. 5A).
4. Secure the remaining panels to one another before driving the T-posts.
5. Once all the panels are in place and secured, shape the trap further by pulling the panels to their desired location (Fig. 6). If the trap is in a wooded area, trees can be used for support.
6. Once the trap is in the desired shape and location, use T-posts to anchor the trap (Fig. 7). Space the T-posts about 4 feet apart. Feral hogs are extremely strong and will test the trap when captured.

Figure 5

A panel secured to a head gate T-post with doubled wire (A). The remaining panels are attached to one another. It is important to overlap the ends of the panels (B).

A captured hog can damage the sturdiest of traps, and those made of weaker materials may allow the hogs to escape altogether. Always make traps as strong as possible.

Trap doors and trigger mechanisms

In most cases, the appropriate trigger mechanism depends on the door selected for the trap. Most corral traps are built

Figure 6

An extra pair of hands is helpful when attaching panels. One person holds the panels in place while the other secures them (A). After all the panels are secured, pull them to their desired location (B) to form a circle or teardrop shape.

with saloon-type gates, drop gates, or lifting rooter gates (Fig. 8).

An advantage of the saloon-type and rooter-type doors is that they can be set in an open position using a prop such as a two-by-four or a stick. A hook and eye latch can also be used to hold the trap door open until it is triggered. This approach was used in the example in Figure 7. After the first animals are captured, more hogs can enter by pushing their way into the trap.

When designing a corral trap, consider sharing gates with your neighbor. Because the gate does not need to be in place until the trap is set, a little planning and coordination can help cut material cost and build on efforts of others to increase your effectiveness.

For large corral traps, place the trigger at the back of the trap, away from the door. This allows many hogs to enter the trap before the door closes. Most trap triggers are made with wire. Some people use picture framing wire, as it is durable enough to spring the trap but will break if a hog becomes entangled.

Attach the wire to a two-by-four or other prop mechanism on the trap door and string it to the back of the trap, where you will place the bait in a hole or scatter it on the ground (Fig. 9).

Use T-posts or trees to support the wire from the trap door to the back of the trap. Construct wire eyelets and attach them to the T-posts or trees. As the hogs root for the bait, the wire is stretched and the prop is pulled out, triggering the door to close.

Pre-baiting

For all feral hog traps, it is critical to pre-bait for a period before setting the trap. Pre-baiting will attract animals and train them to enter the trap. Trapping is a process, not an event:

1. Place the bait around the gate and within the trap interior.
2. Continue pre-baiting until feral hogs are consistently feeding on the bait and entering the trap. Wait until an entire sounder appears to be frequenting the trap.
3. Finally, before setting the trap, place the bait all the way to the trigger at the back of the trap. However, do not place the bait directly

Figure 7

Corral traps of different sizes secured with T-posts. Notice that both traps are located in wooded areas, providing concealment and shade.

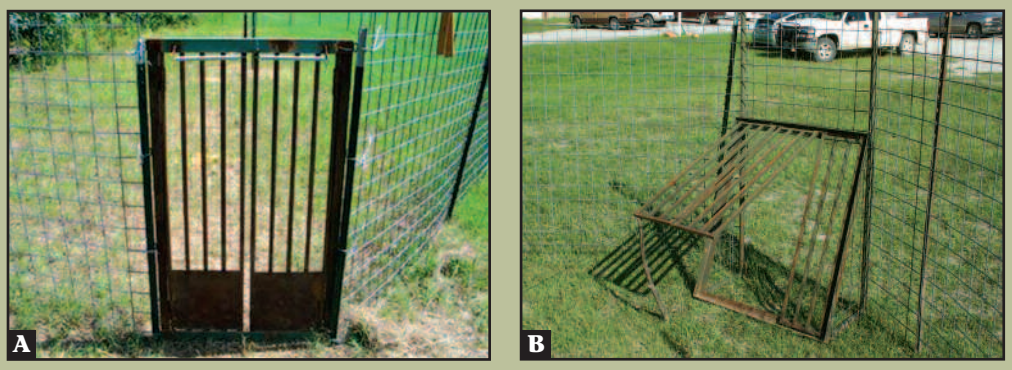
on the tripwire, as this may cause the gate to be triggered before all the hogs have entered.

4. Bait and set the trap.

Trapping tips

- Place traps on or next to existing feral hog trails.
- Coordinate with your neighbors to share trap gates.
- Always make the traps as strong as possible.
- Camouflage the traps if you are dealing with trap-shy hogs.
- A game camera can help identify the number of hogs and other species entering the trap and suggest the optimal time to set the trap.
- Pre-bait traps with the door open; after the hogs are routinely entering the trap, set it.
- Minimize baiting outside the trap; make the hogs enter the trap in order to get the bait.
- Souring corn in water will help avoid attracting nontarget animals, such as deer.
- Alternate bait types if necessary.
- If possible, check traps from a distance.
- Avoid leaving human scent in the area, especially if you are dealing with trap-shy hogs.
- Check traps regularly. Daily inspections are recommended in hot weather.
- Be persistent.

Figure 8



Swing gates require springs for closing (A). Lifting doors can be set in an open position like a drop gate, and once triggered, more hogs can push their way inside the trap (B). After triggering, the gate will close but permit more hogs to enter.

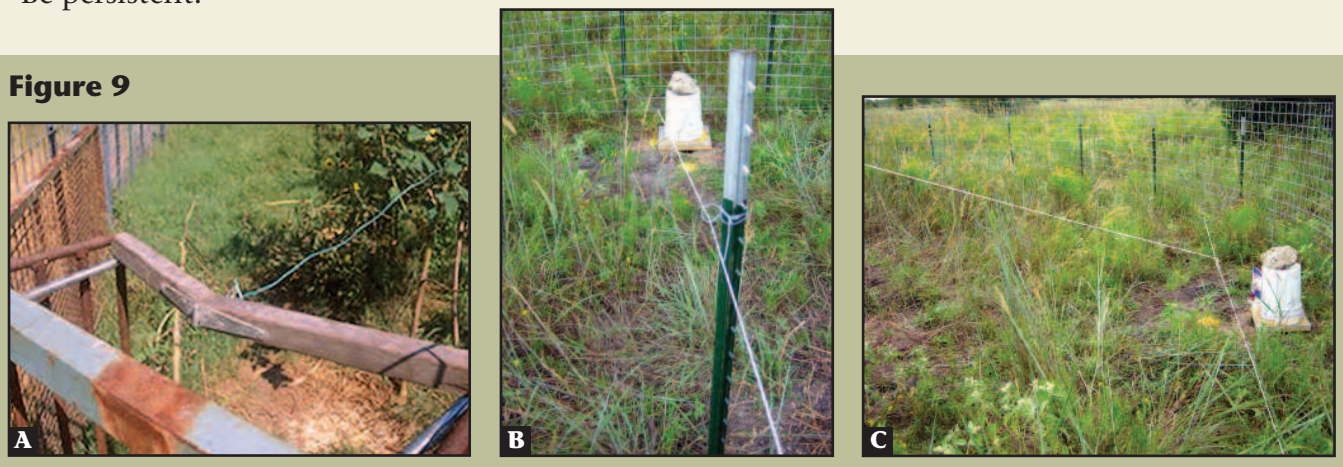
Trap placement

Trap placement is critical when determining the size of a corral trap. Large traps are often considered more permanent, and they are typically placed in areas where the hogs will return in the future, such as near creeks or drainages used as travel corridors.

Set the trap upwind of an area frequented by hogs. Ideal locations include ponds, and other watering locations, particularly those near bedding or feeding areas. Hog trails linking these areas are excellent trap sites. If the captured hogs will be sold to a processor, choose an area accessible to a truck and trailer in all weather conditions.

The trap interior does not have to be completely clear, as brush or trees inside the trap will

Figure 9



A board is used as a prop on a swing gate (A). T-posts guide the wire from the prop to the back of the trap (B). The wire is then attached to another wire forming a T-intersection at the trigger point (C). As the hogs feed on the bait, the wire is stretched, and the prop pulls from the gate. (Source: Greg Pleasant).

provide camouflage for the trap and shade for captured animals.

In most cases, corral traps are within floodplains. Because of this, be sure to place the trap in an area that will minimize damage by rising floodwaters.

State regulations

The Texas Animal Health Commission regulates the holding and transportation of feral hogs from the property where they were captured. Follow the appropriate regulations if you plan to transport captured hogs to a holding facility or to slaughter.

For more information on these regulations, see http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/animal_health/swine/swine.html.

Summary

Corral traps are extremely effective in managing feral hog numbers, especially when used in conjunction with other control methods. Although they require more effort to install and maintain, they can effectively capture many hogs at a time.

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