

# Wild Pigs:

## *Damage and Disease Threats*



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Free-roaming populations of wild pigs (also called feral hogs or swine) in the United States are located in over forty states. Some experts estimate their numbers at over six million, with the largest populations located in California, Florida, Oklahoma, and Texas. Wild pigs cause extensive damage and disease threats to private and public property, natural ecosystems, native fauna and flora, livestock health, and human health.

Wild pig populations are spread across the country primarily by human-aided movement and illegal releases, and also by accidental escapes or abandonment of domestic swine. Unless controlled, populations will continue to increase through natural range expansion.

Expanding populations of wild pigs are a significant concern to farmers, livestock producers, natural resource managers, and animal and human health professionals. However, wild pig issues are not limited to natural areas and rural environments. Wild pigs are highly adaptable and are becoming more common in suburban areas, rooting up lawns, gardens, golf courses, cemeteries, and city parks.

***Wild pigs have the potential to spread diseases that affect people, pets, and livestock.***

## An Invasive Species

Wild pigs are an invasive, non-native, species. Other than Collared peccary (javelina), there are no native pigs in American continents. Many wild pigs are descendants of domestic swine that were first introduced to the U.S. in 1539 by Spanish explorers. Following their arrival, it was a common practice for settlers to allow their domestic swine to roam freely.

Many years later, sport hunters introduced Eurasian wild pigs (often referred to as Russian boars) into certain areas where their bloodlines mixed with domestic swine. Due to their extensive crossbreeding, wild pigs often vary in appearance and can resemble domestic breeds of pigs.

Indiana's wild pigs can include genetic combinations of Eurasian wild pigs, domestic varieties, and pot-bellied pigs. While pot-bellied pigs are not as problematic as Eurasian wild pigs, they will cause similar damage to crops and natural resources.



## Identifying Damage

Wild pig damage is often caused at night when the animals are most active. The best way to tell if wild pigs are active in your area is to look for common signs of rooting, rubbing, wallowing, tracks, and trails. If you suspect wild pigs are present, contact APHIS for a site visit or consultation.

## Disease and Wild Pigs

Wild pigs are known to carry or transmit over 30 diseases and 37 parasites that can be transmitted to livestock, people, pets, and wildlife. If a foreign animal disease, such as classical swine fever or foot-and-mouth disease, were to enter the United States, wild pigs could spread the disease to domestic swine or other susceptible animals. Once prevalent in wild pig populations, the disease would be extremely difficult to eradicate. Another concern is the potential for wild pigs to reintroduce diseases already eradicated in U.S. livestock. For example, domestic pigs are now free of pseudorabies and swine brucellosis. Wild pigs may carry these diseases. If reinfection through wild pigs should occur, it would be economically devastating to the pork industry.



Pot-belly Hybrid



Eurasian Wild Boar



Cross-bred Pigs



Cross-bred Pigs

It can be difficult to distinguish wild pigs from domestic swine based on appearance alone. Illegal relocations of wild pigs have resulted in extensive crossbreeding, producing variations in appearance. Indiana's wild pigs include combinations of Eurasian wild pigs, domestic, and pot-bellied pigs. Report any incidence of wild pig activity to APHIS.

*In just a few nights, wild pigs can destroy crops, native habitats, flower beds, and pasturelands.*



*Tree Damage*



*Wild Pig wallows*



*Corn Damage*



*Flower Bed and Lawn Damage*

## *The Cost of Wild Pig Damage*

It is estimated that wild pigs in the U.S. cause more than \$1.5 billion in damages and control costs each year. For example, rooting and wallowing activities cause property damage and erosion. Wild pigs eat and destroy field crops such as corn, wheat, hay, pastures, melons and other truck crops. They are also opportunistic predators that will prey upon young livestock and other small animals, including all types of ground-nesting wildlife.

The rooting activities of wild pigs will destroy native vegetation. Invasive plants often re-vegetate in damaged areas and will spread and crowd out native plants. Their wallowing activities can contaminate water supplies and impact water quality. Wild pigs are known to damage livestock fences and consume livestock feed, minerals, and protein supplements.

## *Reducing Wild Pig Damage*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is working in collaboration with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indiana State Board of Animal Health, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to provide landowners with technical information to help reduce/eliminate the population of wild pigs in Indiana and the threats caused by them to Indiana's agricultural crops, livestock, natural resources, and human and animal health.

### *Be Part of the Solution*

- Stay informed. Learn the facts about wild pigs; how to identify them and the damage they cause.
- Report wild pig sightings and damage to APHIS toll free: 1-855-386-0370.
- Farmers may need to plant crops that are less attractive to wild pigs. For example, some Indiana farmers plant soybeans instead of corn in areas that are frequently used by wild pigs.
- If you raise domestic pigs, maintain adequate biosecurity measures at your facility to prevent the accidental release of domestic pigs or the possible interaction between wild and domestic pigs.
- Do not relocate wild pigs. It is illegal in Indiana to either possess or release live wild pigs, or aid or assist in their release. Captured wild pigs must be euthanized immediately (312 IAC 9-3-18.6). Landowners interested in eliminating wild pigs on their property should contact APHIS to ensure the most effective and appropriate control measures are correctly used. Improperly applied control techniques can result in wild pigs that are bait-shy or trap-shy and much more difficult to remove.



# Impacts to People, Pets and Livestock

Wild pigs often feed and water alongside livestock. Health experts are concerned that such close contact can result in the transmission of disease from wild pigs to livestock and subsequently people. Wild pigs are also known to prey upon young lambs, goats, and calves.

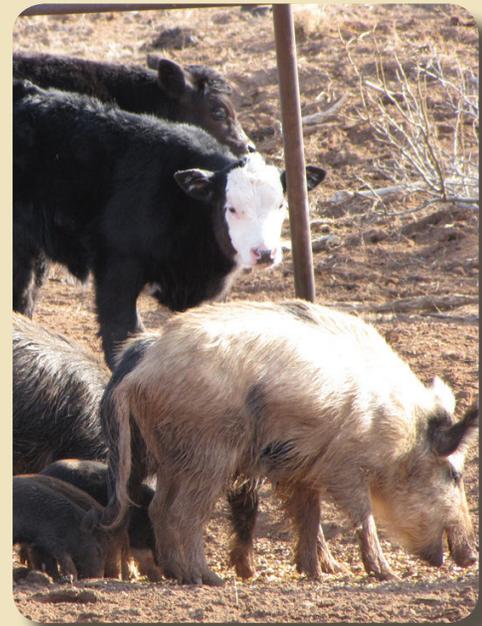
Many of the pathogens wild pigs carry can be transmitted to humans through contact with blood, contaminated water sources, and improperly prepared meat. For example, Brucellosis (or undulant fever) can be transmitted to people when blood or other body fluid from an infected animal comes into contact with a person's eyes, nose, mouth, or open wound. Brucellosis is a life long chronic disease in humans.

Wild pigs can also carry harmful organisms and diseases such as toxoplasmosis, tularemia, trichinellosis, swine influenza, salmonella, E. coli, and a variety of bacterial diseases that can cause sickness and, in some cases, death to people who consume contaminated food products. If you feel ill after coming in contact with or consuming wild pig, contact your physician immediately.

Pseudorabies can be transmitted from wild pigs to some pets, such as dogs and cats, as well as livestock, such as cattle, sheep, and goats. Consumption of pseudorabies-infected meat can be fatal to dogs.

## Diseases

- Pseudorabies
- Brucellosis
- Porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome
- Swine influenza
- Toxoplasmosis
- Tularemia
- Trichinellosis



## Where to Find Assistance

APHIS provides assistance and support to landowners to remove and minimize damage caused by wild pigs. At the landowner's request, APHIS will monitor your property to identify wild pig presence and damage. If wild pigs are identified, then APHIS will work with you to choose the best possible removal strategy or alleviation techniques for your individual property. **APHIS employees will never enter a landowner's property without written permission.** All services provided by APHIS are free of charge.

### APHIS

[www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage)  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/animal\\_dis\\_spec/swine](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_dis_spec/swine)  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife\\_damage/feral\\_swine/pdfs/managing-feral-pigs.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/feral_swine/pdfs/managing-feral-pigs.pdf)

### Indiana Wild Pig Reporting

<http://www.eddmaps.org/indiana/>

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/brucellosis](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/brucellosis)  
[www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis)

### National Feral Swine Mapping System, University of Georgia

<http://swine.vet.uga.edu/nfsms>

### Purdue Extension Wildlife Conflicts Hotline - Feral Hogs

<http://www3.ag.purdue.edu/entm/wildlifehotline/Pages/feralhogs.aspx>

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 Indiana call toll free:  
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