

Feral hogs

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



Feral hogs have recently become a problem in middle Tennessee. Although these animals are not native to this area, it is believed that the hogs were brought in illegally for sport hunting. Although this move was ill advised, the wild hogs were trapped and brought into North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee. If not controlled, the overpopulation of these animals will continue to cause extensive damage for residents. Wild hogs have continued to overpopulate areas and in an effort to find new land and areas off food sources, have continued to move west.

These hogs are becoming a nuisance as far west as Wilson County in Tennessee. Feral hogs are hunted for sport in east Tennessee, as they have been for many years. With the illegal transportation to Tennessee, and migration east, the animals have become a nuisance quickly. A female pig can reproduce twice a year with a litter of up to eight piglets each time. This can add up quickly since there are not many predators of wild hogs. Pigs are highly adaptable to most areas and can tolerate a wide range of climates.

Wild hogs also eat mostly plants but will also eat insects, worms, bird eggs, small birds, and reptiles. Feral hogs reproduce rapidly, increasing their population dramatically and very quickly. The hogs not only cause damage to farms, they can also transmit diseases to livestock. Jason Garrett of the Overton County Cattleman's Association says, " This is a serious threat to all of agriculture" (Garrett). If the wild hog population is not controlled, these animals can take a toll on farmland and also on revenues from crop and livestock production.

Wild hogs can be an extreme nuisance to farmers. A total of \$1.5 billion lost annually because of wild hog damage plus the potential crippling effects that

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disease transmission could have on the livestock industry. They can damage cropland in various ways: eating crops, trampling crops, rooting in the farmland and damaging the plants roots. " They just tear up everything that they come to, and make trails across all the fields... And just wander out in the corn stalks and maul down what they don't eat... just mow them down. said Overton County farmer, Freddie Paul (Paul). While making these trails, they also create ruts that can damage farm equipment and endanger the operator of the equipment. This can be not only dangerous but also costly to repair. The way the economy is presently, most farmers cannot afford to deal with costly or unexpected repairs. Wild hogs will also prey on livestock. This is another hit on a farmer's checkbook. Cattle are the main income for most livestock farmers in middle Tennessee. The diseases spread by these hogs pose a serious threat to farmers income as well.

As of July 31, 2011, the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA) put an end to sport hunting of wild hogs and placed into effect some new hunting regulations to assist in population control of wild hogs. The TWRA has removed wild hogs from big game status and place them in a nuisance category. This implementation technically takes the sport out of wild hog hunting and turns it into eradication efforts. This will allow landowners to use more methods to trap and kill the hogs, methods such as using rifles during daylight hours and live traps with bait.

Landowners are also allowed to shoot hogs at night, using bait all year, with no weapon restrictions. During an interview with TWRA Officer, Pete Geesling, he explained some of the new changes: Landowners, family members legally allowed to hunt the property without a license and up to 10 designees may

assist in the control effort provided by the methods exemption. No more than 10 individuals may be used as designees annually. The exemption will allow shooting at night with the aid of artificial light, shooting over bait during big game season, or any other methods, approved by TWRA.

Dogs may be used as part of the experimental management program in Overton, Fentress, Cumberland and Pickett counties, but no dogs may be used during November or December (Geesling). The TWRA has previously and continues to adjust hunting regulations to aid in eradication efforts. However, research has shown that until these eradication hunts become more evenly spread across the affected area, they may only multiply the problem. Overpopulation will exacerbate in regions, causing more damage, and the efforts to find new food sources will lead these hogs to new areas.

The citizens and farmers of Tennessee, along with TWRA, must work to spread awareness to areas that are beginning to see this problem and try to eliminate it early. The heavily affected areas must continue an eradication effort until the wild hog population is reduced drastically, allowing farmers to reclaim their land. Works Cited " Controlling Wild Hogs. " Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. Web. April 02, 2012. ; <http://tn.gov/twra/feralhog.html>; Garrett, Jason. Personal Interview. 1 April 2012. Geesling, Pete. Personal Interview. 1 April 2012. Paul, Freddie. Person Interview. 31 March 2012.