

Laws and Regulations Governing Feral Hogs in Arkansas

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Feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) are prevalent in many portions of the southeastern United States. Feral hogs are domesticated swine released accidentally or purposefully for sport hunting. After a generation or two, the progeny of a domesticated hog will start to develop different physical characteristics. Their fur may become darker and longer, and their snout may become more elongated. Starting at six to ten months of age, sows produce litters with an average of six piglets. Feral hogs have few predators after reaching maturity (Figure 1).

The feeding and wallowing behaviors of feral hogs create a number of problems, including agricultural crop loss, wildlife habitat loss, water pollution (e.g., sedimentation) and disease transmission to livestock and sometimes people. Non-native feral hogs compete directly with native wildlife species for limited food supplies, disturb habitat and consume small mammals and reptiles. Feral hogs occasionally consume the young of larger mammals [e.g., white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) fawns] and eggs and young of ground-nesting birds [e.g., northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*)]. Feral hogs can carry diseases like pseudorabies and brucellosis and infect other animals or people. Pseudorabies has been diagnosed in dogs trained to hunt feral hogs, though the virus does not affect humans.

In Arkansas, 90 percent of all human *Brucella suis*-associated illnesses from 2004-2011 have been traced directly or indirectly to feral hog exposure, according to data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). *Brucella suis* can cause illness in swine and reindeer but also cattle and bison.

Controlling the prolific feral hog has proven difficult. Feral hogs are very adaptive and learn to avoid hunters and traps. Hogs are very mobile and



FIGURE 1. Like domesticated swine, feral hogs display a variety of coat colors as this Arkansas feral sow with piglets.
Photo by Clint Turnage, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services

will range for miles in search of food and mates. Feral hogs are active day or night. Often they live in heavily wooded areas and avoid human activity, and therefore can remain unseen. Signs that feral hogs are in an area include rooting, tracks, wallows, nests or beds, and tree and post rubs.

Shooting one or two feral hogs does little to control their numbers and typically educates others in the group

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FIGURE 2. Feral hogs captured in a corral trap.

*Photo by Billy Higgenbotham,
Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Bugwood.org*

to avoid humans. Similarly, trapping small numbers of hogs only educates non-trapped hogs and does little to lower the population. Trap-shy hogs soon reproduce and problems return. Some wildlife professionals recommend pursuing trap-shy hogs by strictly regulated hunting with dogs, which can be effective if supervised hunters kill every hog they encounter and release none for additional sport. Corral trapping, in which entire family units, called sounders, of hogs are captured at one time (Figure 2), can be very effective, although trapping requires an investment in equipment and a time commitment. The use of dogs to pursue non-trapped hogs can be very effective, but only as a supplement to enhance an intensive trap-based removal plan.

None of these control methods have proven 100 percent effective. Research to identify effective control measures is ongoing. Using several strategies, such as corral trapping with strategically placed snares around the exterior, followed by shooting and dog-hunting stragglers, may increase chances of success.

Although small herds of feral hogs have lived in the state for generations, it is believed the current distribution of feral hogs is a direct result of releases by sport hunters. Natural dispersal of species typically progresses in a systematic manner, but isolated populations of feral hogs occur in Arkansas with some concentrations occurring on public lands. The Arkansas State Legislature passed Act 1104 to reduce indiscriminate capture and relocation of feral hogs, which went into effect in August 2013. The original act has been revised several times since 2013, and therefore information presented here is subject to change.

Governmental Entities Involved in Feral Hog Control

In Arkansas, feral hogs are classified as “a public nuisance” (A.C.A. § 2-38-501 through A.C.A. § 2-38-504). State legislation allows property owners to control feral hogs on their property. Private landowners may control feral hogs themselves, or allow others, with their permission, to use any method to control feral hogs. The Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Division of the Arkansas Department of Agriculture is responsible for establishing and enforcing regulations for feral hogs. Since feral hogs are not considered wildlife, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission does not regulate the harvest of feral hogs, but allows anyone to take¹ feral hogs while legally hunting other wildlife.

- The Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Division, Arkansas Department of Agriculture is responsible for establishing and enforcing regulations for domestic livestock, including feral hogs. The Division has full authority for the enforcement of livestock and poultry laws and regulations which protect the state’s industry from diseases. The Division is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with federal agencies in matters relating to livestock and poultry disease control programs.
- As outlined under Amendment 35 of the Arkansas Constitution, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is entrusted to preserve, manage and protect the wildlife resources and habitats of the state. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission is responsible for native wildlife (i.e., non-domesticated, free-ranging species) in the state. As a property owner, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission can dictate the terms and conditions for taking feral hogs on Commission-owned and controlled lands, including Wildlife Management Areas.
- The USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services is responsible for providing federal leadership within states on specific wildlife damage issues. In Arkansas, feral hogs are a priority species. Wildlife Services partners with other state and federal agencies to conduct feral hog removal on public and private land and monitor feral hog diseases in the state. They provide technical assistance to landowners over the telephone, through publications and

¹The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission’s Code Book of regulations defines “take” as “to shoot, kill, injure, trap, net, snare, spear, catch, capture or reduce to possession.”

on-site. Wildlife Services partnered with conservation districts in 2020 to provide landowner services for trapping feral hogs in pilot counties in the state. If successful, additional federal funding may become available to expand outreach to additional landowners and counties.

- The Arkansas State Legislature passes bills regarding feral hogs and their control. Those Arkansas state laws relevant to feral hogs are A.C.A. § 2-38-501 through A.C.A. § 2-38-504. The State of Arkansas Code and these laws can be found at <http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us>.

Legal Definitions

“Feral hog” commonly means any hog of the species *Sus scrofa*, including a Russian or European wild boar, which is roaming freely upon public or private land. Arkansas state law broadens the definition of feral hog to both the Suidae and Tayassuidae families of mammals. Those from the Suidae family include domestic swine, Russian boars and European boars. Those from the Tayassuidae family include peccary and javelina.

The Arkansas Code specifically excludes the University of Arkansas Razorbacks’ mascot from state law (Figure 3).

A stray domestic hog is considered feral if it has escaped domestic confinement for more than 5 days. If adjacent landowners are notified within 5 days of the escape, then the hog is not considered feral for 15 days total. If no notification is provided, the hog is considered feral after 5 days.

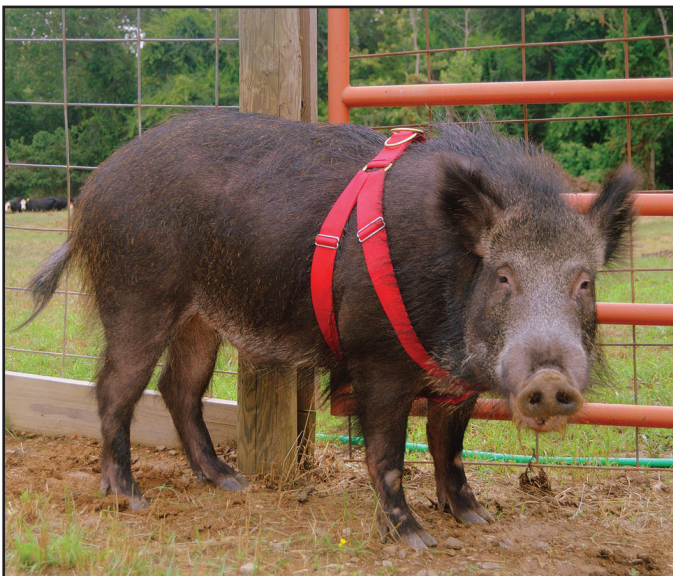


FIGURE 3. The University of Arkansas Razorbacks’ mascot, Tusk, is not considered a feral hog.

Photo courtesy Razorback Athletics

Controlling Feral Hogs on Private and Public Lands

Private Lands

Allowances for the control of feral hogs are made through the Arkansas State Legislature. On private land, feral hogs may be killed or trapped year-round using legal methods, day or night, by a landowner or anyone who has the landowner’s permission. There is no limit to the number of feral hogs that can be removed from private land. Landowners and hunters do not need a hunting license from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to take feral hogs on private land, but anyone who has a revoked hunting license is not allowed to hunt feral hogs during the time of revocation.

- Piling or scattering bait, such as corn, to attract hogs for trapping or other removal is legal on private land in accordance with wildlife baiting laws in most of the state. However, baiting is illegal in the designated Chronic Wasting Disease Management Zone. Baiting is allowed for nuisance wildlife control only with prior approval by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission’s Chief of Wildlife Management. Contact the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to receive approval for baiting feral hogs inside the zone (800-364-4263). Bait may be used to hunt deer and elk on private land from September 1 to December 31 inside the zone.
- Using a spotlight to shoot feral hogs on private land is permitted, but it is recommended contacting your local wildlife officer with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission before the hunt. It is unlawful to shoot deer and other wildlife at night, and notifying the officer will alert him/her of your intention to legally remove hogs, and avoid possible misunderstandings and issuance of a citation.
- The use of dogs to take hogs on private land is legal. Hunters and their dogs must stay off land where the landowner’s permission to hunt has not been granted. It is unlawful for a person to hunt or trap on private property of another person without having obtained verbal or written permission from the landowner or lessee of the property.

Public Lands

Hunting on public land is regulated by the public agency charged with its management. The hunter must have a valid Arkansas hunting license and comply with Arkansas hunting regulations to pursue feral hogs on public land.

State Lands. On Arkansas Game and Fish

Commission's Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), hunters need to check specific rules for each WMA. On some, feral hogs may not be hunted at any time. On others, feral hogs may be taken during open firearm seasons for bear, deer or elk during daylight hours or with archery tackle Nov. 1 through Dec. 31. Dogs are not allowed for hunting feral hogs on WMAs. Refer to a local wildlife officer or the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (800-364-4263, www.agfc.com) for current regulations.

Federal Lands. National Wildlife Refuges with large populations of feral hogs may allow some restricted hunting of feral hogs. At the time of publication, Pond Creek, Felsenthal and Overflow National Wildlife Refuges allowed feral hogs to be harvested during certain months (e.g., from October to January at Felsenthal) with no bag limit. Hunting with dogs is prohibited. For current rules and regulations, call the National Wildlife Refuge office where you intend to hunt (www.fws.gov/refuges/).

Trapping Feral Hogs

A feral hog that has been captured in a trap or by other means is to be killed immediately; however, they can be killed at a later time if not moved from the property of capture. For example, if a large number are captured, some could be butchered each day. Traps must have the trapper's name and address, driver's license number or vehicle license plate number permanently attached to the device. Keeping feral hogs contained is risky since hogs are adept at escape. Therefore, killing immediately is recommended to avoid penalties from releasing hogs.

It is illegal to capture and purposefully release a hog into the wild on public or private land in Arkansas (A.C.A. 2-38-504). A person convicted of releasing a hog is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of \$1,000 to \$5,000 for each hog released, and/or imprisonment of up to 90 days. The only exception is when the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Division authorizes release for tracking or research purposes, and the feral hog is dispatched upon completing the project.

Snaring Feral Hogs

Snaring trap-shy hogs is recommended by some wildlife professionals with experience removing feral hogs. Extra precautions should be taken to avoid trails used by deer and other wildlife. Snares are anchored cable or wire nooses set along a pathway to capture a passing animal. The noose tightens around the captured animal as it walks through the hoop.

Unlike snare regulations for furbearers, loops for feral hogs can be no more than 12 inches in diameter with the bottom of the loop no more than 10 inches off the ground. All snares placed on land farther than 20 feet from a permanent body of water must have a functional "deer lock" that prevents them from closing smaller than 2½ inches for releasing non-target species. Leg snares are illegal in Arkansas.

Snares must have the trapper's name and address, driver's license number or vehicle license plate number permanently attached to the device.

Aerial Operations

Shooting feral hogs from aircraft is legal with a permit issued by the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Division. The applicant must demonstrate feral hog removal will protect land, water, wildlife, livestock, domesticated animals, human life, or crops and not conducted for recreational hunting.

Toxicant Baits

Toxicants and poisons currently are not legal for controlling feral hogs in Arkansas. The EPA approved the use of a specific toxic bait for feral hogs with the active ingredient of warfarin. However, there are concerns about effects on non-target species, and research is currently underway. Sodium nitrate is another active ingredient under investigation, but it has not been approved by EPA in part because of issues with mortality of non-target species, especially birds.

Other Control Methods

Other methods for controlling feral hogs not described in this publication are likely illegal. An unapproved method could endanger non-target wildlife species, domestic animals and/or children. Serious violations could include loss of hunting privileges, fines and/or imprisonment.

Some methods could be in violation of cruelty to animals according to Arkansas law (A.C.A. § 5-62-103) and violators subject to a misdemeanor if proven guilty. Penalties include a fine of \$150 to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to one year and/or community service for the first offense, with additional penalties for subsequent offenses.

Contact the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (800-364-4263) with questions about legal control methods for feral hogs.

Transport and Transfer

Transporting and/or selling a live feral hog is illegal in the state. All living domestic swine must have premises identification or an official ear tag during transport.

Anyone who purchases, sells, offers for sale, receives, possesses, imports, distributes or transports a live feral hog is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of \$1,000 per hog and/or imprisonment up to 30 days. The feral hogs themselves and equipment used in transporting or confining them may also be seized, including vehicles, trailers and traps. In addition to these fines and penalties, a court may require restitution to government agencies and/or law enforcement for expenses incurred.

Consuming Pork From Feral Hogs

Pork from feral hogs may be consumed legally by whoever killed the animal or given away for consumption. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission strongly advises the use of PPE (latex or nitrile gloves) and safe processing practices while dressing and processing meat from feral swine. Safe food handling practices are highly recommended when preparing and cooking pork. See the Extension publication FSFCS82, A Quick Consumer Guide to Safe Food Handling, at www.uaex.uada.edu.

A dead feral hog can be legally transported to a processor for non-sale consumption. It is highly recommended that the processor be contacted prior to delivery. Some processors may not take swine, while others need advance notification for switching their operation from deer or cattle to swine processing.

Pork from Arkansas feral hogs may not be sold for consumption in the marketplace. Federal inspection standards require animals to be inspected while alive prior to slaughter. Because it is illegal to transport live feral hogs in Arkansas, commercial sale of inspected feral hog meat cannot occur in the state at this time. Wild boar meat is sold and distributed in states where it is legal to transport live feral hogs for federal inspection.

Resources

Arkansas Feral Hog Eradication Task Force.

Partnership of public and private agencies and organizations. www.agriculture.arkansas.gov/feral-hog-eradication-task-force.

Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Division,
501-907-2400 (main office),
www.aad.arkansas.gov/arkansas-livestock-and-poultry-commission.

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission,
800-364-4263 (headquarters),
www.agfc.com.

Arkansas State Legislature – Arkansas
General Assembly. Search this website
for legislation concerning feral hogs,
<http://www.arkleg.state.ar.us>

University of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, Arkansas Forest Resources Center. www.uaex.uada.edu/feral-hogs.

USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services – Arkansas Office,
870-673-1121, www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/state_office/arkansas_info.shtml.

Disclaimer

The content in this fact sheet is subject to change.
Contact authorities before removing hogs or conducting other practices.

Acknowledgments

We appreciate reviews of an earlier manuscript by Dr. Pat Badley, state veterinarian, Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission, and Dr. Heidi Adams, program technician, Arkansas Forest Resources Center at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. Also, J.P. Fairhead with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and Clint Turnage with USDA APHIS served as co-authors on an earlier version of this fact sheet.

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FSA9106-PD-2-2020R