



FERAL SWINE WORKING GROUP

Chair: Vacant

Vice-Chair: Terri Brunjes (KY DFWR)

Monday, September 23rd, 2024

3:00 – 5:00 PM (CDT)

Hall of Ideas H, Level 4

[114th Annual Meeting of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#)

Meeting Minutes

- **Call to Order/Review Agenda (Terri Brunjes, KY DFWR)**
 - Vice-Chair Brunjes called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda
 - It was noted that the former Chair of the working group, Dr. Jim LaCour, had stepped down.
- **Introductions (Terri Brunjes, KY DFWR)**
 - Members and guest introduced themselves and represented:
 - 9 State fish and wildlife agencies
 - 3 US Federal agencies
 - 1 regional association
 - 2 non-government conservation organizations
- **National Feral Swine Damage Management Program (Dr. Dana Cole, APHIS-WS)**
 - ***Feral Swine Operations***
 - The National Feral Swine Program (NFSP) conducts operations in 34 states and three territories to control existing and emerging populations of feral swine that threaten agriculture, other property, native ecosystems, and human and animal health.
 - WS eliminated feral swine in twelve states since the beginning of the NFSP (declared eliminated in CO, ID, MD, MN, ME, NJ, and NY, and monitoring to confirm elimination in IA, IN, VT, WA, and WI).
 - IN moved to detection status in 2024.
 - In states where feral swine elimination has occurred, NFSP provides funding to maintain collaborations and monitoring activities; if new populations are detected, additional resources are provided to eliminate new incursions. Operational response to new incursions in FY24 was supported in Maine:
 - Maine confirmed a sighting of feral swine and resources were provided to the State Program to support increased surveillance and removal of the population. Monitoring of the area is ongoing to confirm complete elimination following response.
 - ***Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (Farm Bill)***



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- The 2018 Farm Bill concluded in FY23, but an extension of funding was provided in 2024 (\$15M split between NRCS and WS) and work in pilot project areas was resumed.
- WS continued feral swine management activities in 33 pilot projects in 12 states (AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, HI, MO, OK, and TX; one project in Texas was not continued during the extension because feral swine were already eliminated in this project area.
- Work is ongoing to complete a final Farm Bill report. The report will highlight successes achieved over the six years of funding; including reduced damages to agricultural and natural resources; the results of research documenting costs of feral swine damage, as well as the impact of control strategies; and the outcomes of landowner outreach campaigns.
- Congress continues work to establish a Feral Swine Eradication Program in the next Farm Bill. If not successful, WS may receive an additional extension.
- **Feral Swine Surveillance**
- NFSP conducts targeted surveillance for diseases of highest concern.
- The risk-based surveillance system prioritizes collection of disease samples in areas at highest risk of foreign animal disease entry and areas with high numbers of domestic pigs.
- National surveillance includes serosurveillance for Influenza A and H5 antibody, African swine fever (ASF), classical swine fever, brucellosis, and pseudorabies.
- Detection of H5 antibody in feral swine is very rare (~1%)
- In August 2024, targeted surveillance for HPAI in feral swine began in three states (CA, TX, and NC) representing the three wild bird flyways in counties where previous HPAI detections in wild or domestic animals occurred, or where previous sampling found H5 antibody in feral swine.
- Targeted surveillance for African Swine Fever virus infection (PCR) as well as antibody (ELISA) occurs in the U.S. Protection Zone (USVI and PR) and in 12 states (AL, AZ, CA, FL, GA, LA, MS, NM, OK, SC, TN, and TX) in counties where the risk of ASF is the highest.
- Risk is determined based on likelihood potentially contaminated pork products from ASF-affected countries are brought in by international travelers, cargo, or mail.
- Risk to feral swine is highest where access to landfills potentially containing these contaminated products may occur.
- **ASF Prep & Response**
- APHIS Wildlife Services continues to collaborate with APHIS Veterinary Services in the ASF technical working group, and implementing the ASF Preparedness and Response Plan
- This includes conducting operational activities, outreach, and foreign animal disease surveillance of free-roaming and feral swine in the United States Caribbean territories and in the Continental United States, lowering the risk of ASF introduction to susceptible swine populations in the United States and territories.
- WS is establishing a bank of strategically located traps across the country to rapidly deploy to any area where ASF infection is found in US feral pigs.
- In early September 2024, State WS Program Directors from states conducting surveillance met to discuss response strategies if a positive sample was detected.
- It was noted that response will not look like a typical USDA response to foreign animal disease where a circle is drawn around an infected premise and work begins in that area. Instead, response will look more like a US Forest Service response to a fire where



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the primary goals include containment and protect premises (in this case, domestic pig farm sites)

- It was also noted that coordinated response of state agencies will be necessary and currently state policies and positions on feral swine may make this coordination difficult (e.g., it's no state agency's jurisdiction to respond)
- As a result of this workshop, WS State Program Directors may be organizing partner meetings with State Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources/Fish & Wildlife Commissions in key states to discuss potential impacts to states in the event of an ASF detection in feral pigs and collaboration/coordination opportunities to mitigate these impacts in the event of a detection of ASF in feral swine.

- ***Outreach and Collaboration***

- The *Squeal on Pigs!* outreach and reporting campaign, first established by Pacific Northwest states in 2012, is a collaborative campaign between the United States and Canada for citizen science reporting of feral pig sightings in states with few or no known feral swine populations.
- The app is a key component of US and Canada efforts to identify and eliminate emergent populations of feral swine in northern border states and in prevent transboundary movement of feral pigs. Most Canadian provinces are promoting the use of the application, and many northern border states are also participating in the campaign to raise awareness and encourage public reporting of feral swine to facilitate rapid response and removal of new feral swine populations.
- Because the most common method of ASF detection in affected countries is citizen reporting of dead pigs, WS updated the *Squeal on Pigs!* Application in 2024 to include reporting of morbidity/mortality that may indicate ASF infection. An online training was held September 5, 2024, introduced the app to federal and state partners, including the morbidity/mortality reporting. Participants in the training represented all three North American countries. More trainings will be scheduled since most US State and Federal partners were unable to attend
- WS also provides technical expertise and information exchanges, including field workshops and tabletop exercises, to Canadian colleagues seeking assistance with their feral swine management strategies. Specific events include the Pacific Northwest Economic Region Annual Summit tabletop exercise, a field training workshop in an Ontario provincial park, a WS field workshop, and a training symposium of the Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, Calgary

- **SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group/ MAFWA Feral Swine Committee (Terri Brunjes, KY DFWR)**

- Please find the full combined reports for the SEAFWA/MAFWA/NWPT in the Appendix
- The SEAFWA Wildlife Resource Policy Committee is working with the SEAFWA/MAFWA feral swine groups to develop a position statement on the eradication/reduction of feral swine populations. The group is conducting a survey to determine the best terminology to use in reference to eradication/elimination of feral swine. The committee may develop two documents to address the needs of states because feral swine may be managed for either complete eradication or reduction.



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- **National Wild Pig Task Force (Dr. John Tomecek, TAMU)**
 - Report provided by Vice-Chair Terri Brunjes: The NWPTF will meet every other year during either the Vertebrate Pest Conference or the National Wildlife Damage Management Conference. Please see the Appendix for this report which is combined with the SEAFWA/MAFWA report.
 - The next meeting of the NWPTF will be held March 25-27, 2025 in Starkville, Mississippi in conjunction with the Wildlife Damage Management Conference. John Kinsee is the incoming president.
 - Mikayla Killam (Pig Brig/NWPTF) is working to develop a nation-wide contact list for feral swine management.
- **SEAFWA/WMI Black Bear Resistant Product Testing Program/feral swine toxicant delivery devices (Dr. Bill Moritz, Wildlife Management Institute)**
 - No report was provided
- **Updates on progress from last meeting (Bryant White, AFWA)**
 - Hunter education pamphlet/one pager: Impacts of feral swine on popular game species in the United States
 - This pamphlet remains important, and a draft will be circulated to the working group very soon. It is currently in a draft phase, and we are working to develop an interested ad hoc group to help finalize it.
- **Open Forum**
 - Those in attendance were given an opportunity to discuss feral swine management with their agencies/associations:
 - KY- no sport hunting of pigs but landowners are allowed to shoot pigs to protect property
 - OK- approved the use of Kaput as a toxicant for feral swine but users must be professionally licensed in one of three categories
 - NC- there is a \$1000 fine for translocating swine (first offence), \$5000 fine for second offence or \$500/pig (whichever is greater).
 - MN- if domestic swine escape it must be reported within 72 hours, and then the animals must be recovered within an additional 72 hours. Owners are liable for damage. The animals may be destroyed after the second 72 hours, if not recovered.
 - OH- HB503- tightens the regulations on feral swine; no person shall release feral swine or release feral swine for hunting. Importing feral swine into the state is a 5th degree felony.
 - American Bird Conservancy- rodenticide registration (warfarin) can be used in some states but only by registered applicants (OK, TX)
 - UT- a population of about 50 feral swine were recently detected in the Henry Mountains. They are not protected. The state is working to figure out the best way to eliminate the population.
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- **Next steps and Wrap-up Discussion**
 - The working group is seeking someone to serve as Chair
 - The Hunter education pamphlet needs expert volunteers to help finalize it
 - Our next meeting will be held during the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, March 9-14, 2025.
- **Adjourn**

Appendix

Combined report of the SEAFWA, MAFWA, and NWPTF

AFWA FERAL SWINE WORKING GROUP MEETING

SEAFWA WHWG REPORT

SEPTEMBER 23, 2024

A joint virtual meeting of SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group and MAFWA Feral Swine Committee was held on June 3, 2024. Topics included an update of the National Wild Pig Task Force meeting held in California in March; a CWD and ASF update, given by Dr. Dana Cole of USDA; and a discussion of WMI's publication "Research and Analysis of Policy and Law to Prevent Translocation of Live Feral Swine". Additionally, state reports were given and an update on the toxicant, Kaput, was provided to the group.

SEAFWA Annual Conference will be held in Augusta, Georgia in October 2024. The Wild Hog Working Group will not hold a meeting during this conference as most members will not be in attendance. The next SEAFWA WHWG meeting will be held jointly with MAFWA FSC at the Wildlife Damage Mgmt. Conference in March 2025 in Starkville, Mississippi.

The SEAFWA Wildlife Resources Committee, through the Chairman, recently directed the SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group to prepare a position statement regarding wild hog control and eradication. (Appendix 2). This position statement could provide sound scientific support to aid states in eradication and reduction efforts. Part of the charge included the recommendation of preferred terminology among wild hog professionals, choosing between eradication or elimination. A survey was sent to SEAFWA, MAFWA, and NWPTF working group members asking for input on their use of terminology. NWPTF will also disseminate this survey to each state's task force and any other wild hog working groups.

I'm not sure if everyone remembers that there were previous discussions last year to write a similar position statement under the NWPTF Policy Sub-Committee with the idea of combining the efforts of the policy sub-committee, SEAFWA WHWG, and MAFWA FSC. Just to clarify, this will now be completed under the guidance of the SEAFWA Wildlife Resources Committee.

Discussions with the former AFWA FSWG Chair, Dr. Jim LaCour, and current MAFWA Chair, Alan Leary, who are also SEAFWA WHWG members, to determine the best way to write this position statement were held. Much of the discussion rested on the need to consider the differences between states with small populations and goals of eradication versus states with large populations in which the goal is population reduction or damage management.

We discussed creating two separate guidance documents in which states were categorized based on specific criteria such as wild hog population sizes, resources, hunting culture, etc. One guidance document could focus on eradication for states that meet criteria conducive to eradication and another guidance document for those states that don't meet criteria conducive to eradication. In August 2020, SEAFWA authored a "Toolkit for Reducing the Spread of Wild Hogs in States with Small or Non-existent Populations". (Appendix 3). This "how to" guide recommends a statewide elimination of sport hog hunting for those states with small, scattered populations. Thoughts were to incorporate this document into the position statement. There were concerns that having two different objectives within the same document could lead to pressure for states to choose a goal that may not be scientifically sound. Further discussions will be held to determine the best course of action.

Additionally, I met with Mikayla Killam of NWPTF to discuss the creation of a nationwide wild hog contact list to facilitate better communication on wild hog issues throughout the country, including Canada and Mexico. As a result of this discussion, a question was added to the SEAFWA survey asking participants to list each wild hog committee members participate in.

Lastly, the 2024 SEAFWA WHWG annual report was recently completed. Annual state highlights include several changes in regulations and legislation:

- Kentucky- In an effort to stop illegal releases and increase eradication success, regulations that prohibit sport hunting of wild pigs became effective on June 6, 2024. Private landowners still have the right to protect their property from damage by wild pigs under statutory authority.
- Oklahoma - on April 24, 2024, the Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture voted to approve Kaput Feral Hog Bait as a state restricted use pesticide. Kaput Feral Hog Bait can be applied by those who are licensed in one of the three following categories: Bird and Vertebrate Animal Pests, Agricultural Plant, or private applicator.
- North Carolina - as of July 3, 2024, the NC General Assembly passed stricter penalties for transporting or releasing live feral swine. The punishment went from a civil penalty of not less than \$250 (transport and release counting as separate offenses) to a criminal penalty of not less than \$1,000 for the first offense and not less than \$5,000 or \$500 per feral swine (whichever is greater) for subsequent offenses, plus the possibility of having their hunting or trapping license revoked temporarily or permanently. Feral swine are also now identified in law as "an invasive species and are deemed destructive to property and to be a potential safety or health risk to people, livestock, and other native wildlife."

Submitted by Terri Brunjes, Chair of SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group

APPENDIX 1

AFWA FERAL SWINE WORKING GROUP MEETING

SEAFWA WHWG REPORT

March 20, 2024

The National Wild Pig Task Force was held in conjunction with the Vertebrate Pest Conference March 11-15, 2024. SEAFWA WHWG Members in attendance were Alan Leary (Missouri), Terri Brunjes (Kentucky), and Falyen Owens (North Carolina). Due to limited SEAFWA attendance, a SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group meeting was not held. There are plans to hold a virtual joint SEAFWA/MAFWA meeting this spring to share information and updates from the Task Force meeting, as well as discuss any additional items brought up by members.

The agenda for the joint SEAFWA WHWG/MAFWA FSC meeting will include a review and discussion of the recently released "Research and Analysis of Policy and Law to Prevent Translocation of Live Feral Swine" document produced by Wildlife Management Institute in partnership with Southwick Associates and the Wildlife Restoration. This document provides information that could be used to inform working groups on the status of our goals and objectives. SEAFWA Objective 1) is to "Encourage uniform policies that prohibit the interstate movement of wild hogs and translocation of wild hogs". According to WMI, we are close to reaching this goal nationally, as most states have regulations or policies in place to prohibit importation and transportation of wild pigs. Only a few states allow importation, although most of these states restrict importation for only specific permitted activities.

During the NWPTF Policy Sub-Committee meeting, committee members discussed writing position statements to support states in wild pig eradication/reduction efforts. One position statement topic of interest was a wild pig sport hunting prohibition. Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to prohibit sport hunting of wild pigs in December 2023. The amended regulation is currently going through the legislative process. This regulation should go into effect this September. When KY started this journey, the Department sought support from the KY Wild Pig Task Force. However, all members of the KY Task Force were employees of various government agencies. As you know government employees are often restricted in lobbying or showing support for regulatory amendments, especially if the issue is controversial, such as a pro-hunting agency requesting the removal of a hunting season. Luckily, many hunting and conservation organizations stepped up and provided support: National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, National Deer Association, and several others. Support from these organizations were essential in getting this regulation passed. However, support from wild pig organizations should have more influence. (By the way, another reason the pig hunting prohibition was successful, is that KY doesn't yet have a large pig hunting culture.) So, if a state had the opportunity to close a hunting season for wild pigs, and found themselves in a similar situation, NWPTF could provide a policy statement supporting the prohibition of a wild pig hunting season using sound scientific knowledge. So, what does this have to do with SEAFWA WHWG? Alan Leary, who is the MAFWA FSC and NWPTF Policy sub-committee chair, and I would like to combine the efforts of the policy sub-committee, SEAFWA WHWG, and MAFWA FSC to write this position statement. In 2020, SEAFWA authored a "Toolkit for Reducing the Spread of Wild Hogs in States with Small or Non-existent Populations" Version 2, in August 2020. This "how to" guide recommends a statewide elimination of sport hog hunting. Adding a policy statement from the National Wild Pig Task Force will provide

additional necessary support for any state interested in closing wild pig hunting seasons to aid in eradication and reduction efforts.

Submitted by Terri Brunjes, Chair of SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group

APPENDIX 2

Wildlife Resources Committee Charge to Wild Hog Working Group 2024

Background: State wildlife agencies (SEAFWA member states) find themselves pressured to liberalize wild hog hunting opportunities. However, research indicates recreational hunting should not be the primary method for wild hog control or eradication efforts.

Charge: The Wildlife Resources Committee, through the Chairman, directs the Wild Hog Working Group to prepare a position statement regarding wild hog control and eradication.

This position should:

- 1) Discuss and make a recommendation if the terminology used should be “eradication” or “elimination”.
- 2) State that eradication or elimination, to the extent possible, is the ultimate goal.
- 3) Outline the primary approaches and tactics for wild hog control efforts.
- 4) Outline the importance of targeted and specialized trapping and whole sounder removal.
- 5) Outline whether liberalization of recreational hunting (cite pros and cons) is an appropriate consideration for state agencies. Further, outline the challenges of wild hog control efforts for states with established hog hunting seasons and cultures.

Toolkit for Reducing the Spread of Wild Hogs
In
States with Small or Non-existent Populations
Version 2, August 2020



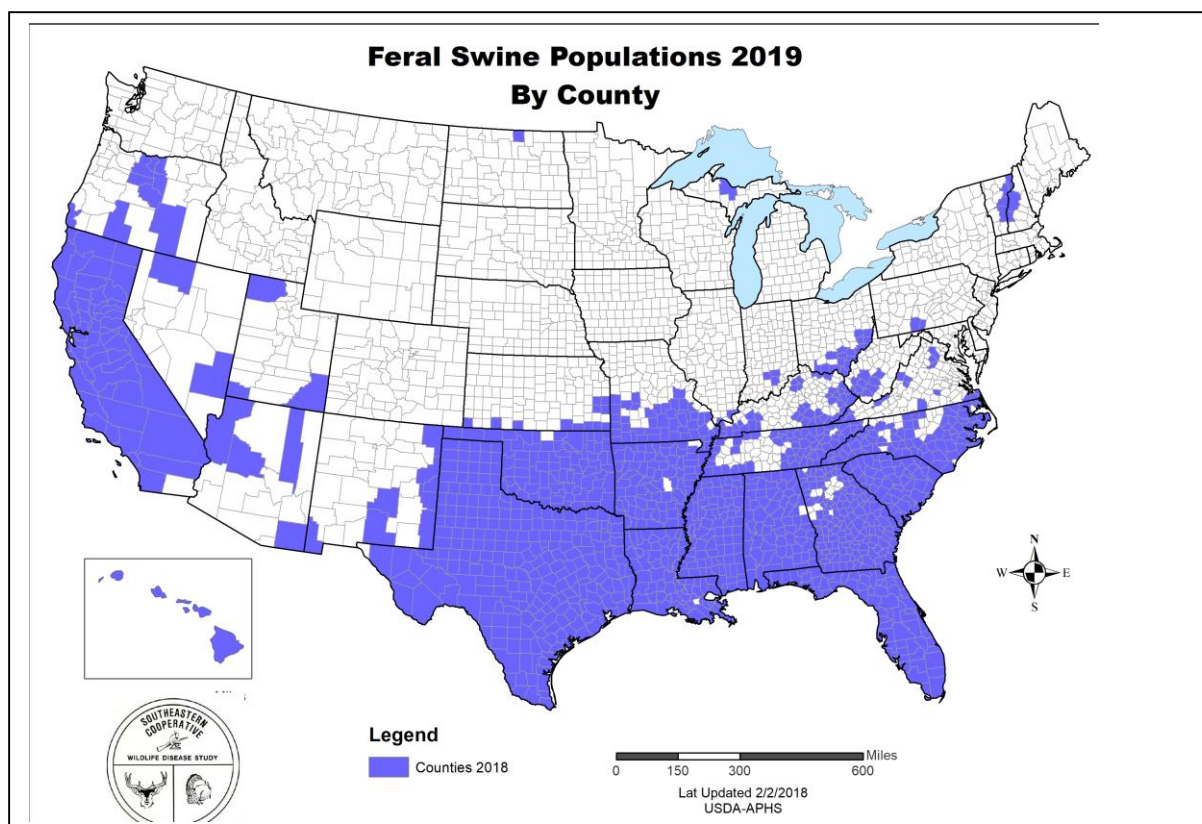
Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Wild Hog Working Group

Introduction

Wild hogs, also referred to as feral swine, are an invasive, exotic species that pose a serious threat to North America's natural resources. Their rooting and feeding behavior contributes to soil erosion, reduced water quality, and damage to agricultural lands including cropland, pasture, and hayfields. The reproductive rate, omnivorous appetite and destructive feeding behavior of wild hogs make them a direct threat to our native plant and animal populations, including game animals as well as threatened and endangered species. The spread of disease by wild hogs is another major concern and there is potential for these diseases to jeopardize people, pets, wildlife, and livestock, including the domestic pork industry. Our definition of a wild hog is any hog swine (*Sus scrofa*) that has lived any portion of its life outside of confinement.

Historically hogs were introduced in many states and remained in isolated areas for decades. However, over the past 20 years with the increase in sport hunting interest (primarily dog hunting) hog populations have spread significantly due to translocation. Wild hogs are extremely adaptable and can live in and exploit any eco-region in North America. Therefore, aggressive efforts are needed to eliminate introduction, arrest range expansion, and eradicate existing wild hog populations where feasible. States with newly established populations should be particularly proactive while eradication is a viable option. It is critical to implement control efforts immediately since delaying the response will increase future cost and manpower demands.

This document was prepared by the Wild Hog Working Group of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to serve as a template for the implementation of wild hog eradication programs for state wildlife agencies with existing or emerging populations. The implementation of these steps is particularly important for states that currently do not have wild hog populations.



Step 1: Develop an inter-agency task force

Effective wild hog control will require collaboration between various organizations that are affected by wild hogs. These organizations will work together to carry out each of the following steps within this document. It is imperative to collaborate in order to make necessary changes because wild hogs may be regulated by multiple agencies. These organizations should work together to identify and secure all available funding for wild hog management efforts.

Examples of partner organizations will include but are not limited to the following:

State agencies: wildlife agency, department of agriculture, health and hospitals, forestry, parks, department of natural resources, judicial branches of government, environmental agencies, association of county officials, and Extension.

Federal agencies: USDA Vet Services, USDA Wildlife Services, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, National Parks Service, US Geological Service, Army Corps of Engineers, and NRCS.

Local governments: Levee boards, homeowners associations and soil and water conservation districts.

Non-government organizations: Farm Bureau, Pork Producers, Cattlemen's Association, Dairy Association, Wildlife Federations, hunting organizations, timber producers, landowner associations, conservation organizations, and agricultural commodity boards.



Step 2: Increase public understanding of wild hog issues

Common information needs include: 1) commodity-specific agricultural economic damage estimates and costs of hog control efforts, 2) environmental impacts, 3) disease transmission to humans, domestic livestock, and wildlife, 4) impacts to wildlife including resource competition, predation, and habitat degradation, 5) effective and ineffective hog control methods, emphasizing that hunting is not an effective control method.

Generation and dissemination of these assessments are crucial for public support and to justify legislative and regulatory changes.

Step 3: Increase regulatory mechanisms and enforcement capability to control illegal transport and release of wild hogs

Transport and relocation of wild hogs is the primary means by which populations are established in new areas. Thus, state agencies should strive to make the possession, transport, and sale of live wild hogs illegal. Free-ranging domestic hogs should not be allowed and domestic "backyard" hog operations should be permitted by state departments of agriculture. Lastly, a single regulatory agency should be responsible for the take and transport of wild hogs.

Suggested legislation verbiage to help curtail unwanted translocation of feral hogs is listed below:

- (a) It is not the intent of this section to impede the legal transportation of domestic swine.**
- (b) As used in this section, "wild hog" means any swine that has lived any portion of its life outside of confinement.**
- (c) It is an offense to possess, transport, and import live wild hogs.**
- (d) It is an offense to intentionally release any swine into the wild.**
- (e) Any law enforcement officer, any conservation agent, or any enforcement agents of the state department of agriculture are authorized to enforce the provisions of this section.**
- (f) A violation of subsections (c) and (d) is a Class A misdemeanor. Each wild hog in possession constitutes a separate offense. (Stiffer penalties can be considered on a state by state basis.)**

Step 4: Statewide elimination of sport hog hunting

Sport hunting is not an effective control method for wild hogs; rather, it has been shown to be the likely mechanism for the establishment and spread of hog populations for the purpose of sport hunting. Wild hogs should be classified as an exotic nuisance species, rather than big game. Additionally, hog hunting/shooting preserves should be illegal. Elimination of all economic and sporting incentives for the pursuit of wild hogs is imperative for the success of this program in each state. This action reduces the motivation to stock, transport or perpetuate hog populations for the purpose of hunting.

Step 5: Enable landowners and land managers to control wild hogs

Enable public and private landowners to perform lethal wild hog control including but not limited to trapping, day and night shooting over bait, and aerial gunning.

Eradication of localized wild hog populations must be aggressive, continuous, and simultaneous on public and private lands. In the absence of aggressive and coordinated effort, wild hogs will simply take refuge on untreated state, federal, or private lands and re-populate adjacent areas when eradication efforts cease. It is important to note that wild hog control and eradication methods must be adaptive as more is learned of the behavior and dynamics of wild hog populations as well as the efficiency of control efforts.