



## **FERAL SWINE WORKING GROUP**

### **90TH NORTH AMERICAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONFERENCE**

**Chair: Terri Brunjes (KY DFWR)**

**Vice-Chair: (vacant)**

**Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**8:00 – 10:00 AM (EDT)**

**Galt House Hotel**

**Louisville, Kentucky**

# **Meeting Minutes**

## **Agenda**

- Call to Order/Review Agenda (Terri Brunjes, KY DFWR)
  - Attendance was slim with only 8 participants. AFWA FSWG currently meets biannually at the AFWA national conference and the North American Wildlife Conference. Due to limited participation and travel restrictions of many federal and state agencies, AFWA is considering only meeting once per year at the AFWA Conference.
- Approval of the [minutes from the AFWA Annual Meeting 2024](#)
  - A motion was made, and the minutes were approved
- Introductions (Terri Brunjes, KY DFWR)
  - Participants included state and federal agency and NGO partners
- National Feral Swine Damage Management Program (Dr. Dana Cole, APHIS-WS)
  - Please see Appendix for the report
- SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group/ MAFWA Feral Swine Committee (Terri Brunjes, KY DFWR)
  - The next SEAFWA WHWG meeting will be held jointly with MAFWA FSC at the Wildlife Damage Mgmt. Conference March 24-28, 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



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and eradication. The first draft of this document has been completed. Part of the charge included the recommendation of preferred terminology among wild hog professionals, choosing between “eradication” or “elimination”. A survey was emailed to SEAFWA, MAFWA, and NWPTF working group members asking for input on their use of terminology. The results indicated an almost even split between the two words “eliminate” and “eradicate”. Out of 103 votes, 44 voted for eradication and 48 voted for elimination while 11 voted for other terminology. A discussion to decide on terminology and to finalize the position statement will occur at the upcoming joint meeting in Starkville.

- The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) Feral Swine Committee held a meeting during the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference that was held in St. Louis, MO in January 2025. Alan Leary (Committee Chair from MO) and Eric Nelson (MN) were there in person. Dr. Dana Cole (Director for USDA National Feral Swine Program), Terri Brunjes (KY), Shane Hesting (KS), Jim Coffey (IA) and Ryan Wheeler (MI) attended virtually.
- Due to the small attendance at recent MAFWA Feral Swine Committee meetings, there was a group discussion regarding member’s thoughts on the value of this Committee and whether it should remain a MAFWA Committee. Everyone in attendance stated that they think the Committee is a valuable resource and they have benefitted from being part of it. It is a great place to share information and provides opportunity to communicate with other states.
- National Wild Pig Task Force (TBD)
  - The next NWPTF meeting will be held in conjunction with the TWS Wildlife Damage Management Conference in Starkville, Mississippi March 25-27, and the Task Force Meeting will be held the morning of the 27.
  - We received a fairly healthy list of nominations for National Wild Pig Task Force Steering Committee Elections.
  - The ballot has been distributed and voting is now open with a closing date of March 25
  - Election results will be announced at the NWPTF meeting held March 27
  - The new official email address for all Task Force communications will be [nwptf.chair@gmail.com](mailto:nwptf.chair@gmail.com). If you did not receive the email with the ballot and feel that you should have, please reach out to this address and we will get a ballot to you ASAP.
  - We anticipate the NWPTF to again be held in conjunction with the Vertebrate Pest Conference in San Diego in March of 2026.
  - Our new Steering Committee will be tasked with reviewing and revising our bylaws over the next year, with the goal of streamlining processes to better support the current operational strategies of the Task Force.
- SEAFWA/WMI Black Bear Resistant Product Testing Program/feral swine toxicant delivery devices (Dr. Bill Moritz, Wildlife Management Institute)
  - More zoos are being contacted for testing of bear resistant containers
- Updates on progress from last meeting (Bryant White, AFWA)



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- Hunter education pamphlet/one pager: Impacts of feral swine on popular game species in the United States
- Some progress has been made but this project has been put on hold
- Open Forum
  - *Discussions occurred that covered several topics including the use of drones to support USDA aerial operations, the use of fertility control methods, and genetic testing to determine information relating to the illegal release and translocation of wild hogs. Several states shared updates. Arkansas has shortened their hog hunting season. Louisiana is also placing new restrictions on hog hunting, which is challenging due to the hog hunting culture in this state. Kentucky prohibited wild hog hunting in June 2024. Ohio has passed legislation to prohibit wild hog hunting, as well. This will go into effect on March 20, 2025.*
- Next steps and Wrap-up Discussion
- Adjourn

Feral Swine Working Group

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference 2025

# Appendix

- **Report: USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services National Feral Swine Damage Management Program**

## **Feral Swine**

### ***Feral Swine Operations***

- The National Feral Swine Program (NFSP) conducts operations in 32 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.
  - Agriculture continues to comprise the majority (48%) of resources protected, followed by property (27%).
  - WS eliminated feral swine in twelve states since the beginning of the NFSP (declared eliminated in CO, ID, MD, MN, ME, NJ, NY, IA, and VT and monitoring continues to confirm elimination in IN, WA and WI).
  - 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:
    - Maine confirmed a sighting of feral swine and resources were provided to support increased surveillance and removal of the population. Monitoring of the area is ongoing to determine any present/remaining feral swine following response.
    - An incident involving free ranging domestic swine deemed to be a risk of establishing a feral population resulted in establishment of a Cooperative Service Agreement between the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and USDA WS to collaboratively eliminate the risk.

### ***Feral Swine Surveillance***

- NFSP also 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, swine brucellosis, and pseudorabies.
  - 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.
  - 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.

### ***Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program (Farm Bill)***

- After a short cessation of activities in pilot project areas following conclusion of the 2018 Farm Bill, 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.

### ***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.
  - As part of ASF preparedness and response planning, WS identified a gap between the availability/need for traps dedicated to an ASF response and a manufacturing/delivery lag time, which could significantly reduce WS' ability to provide rapid depopulation efforts in the event of an outbreak. As such, WS is establishing a bank of strategically located traps to prevent the gap in availability from negatively impacting an effective ASF response.
- In the Caribbean:
  - As of early February 2025, WS removed 6,010 feral swine in Puerto Rico (PR) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) and sampled 3,613 of those animals. All adult and subadult feral swine removed from an area are sampled and tested via antigen-based (PCR) and antibody-based (ELISA) diagnostics for classical swine fever and African swine fever at the Dorado Laboratory. All samples have been negative.
  - WS continues to collaborate with APHIS Veterinary Services to respond to illegal boat landings in Puerto Rico. In the event investigation of the landing identifies potentially contaminated products, WS will work to identify and remove feral swine in the area.
- The *Squeal on Pigs!* outreach and reporting campaign is a collaborative campaign facilitated by the Transboundary Feral Swine Working Group to allow for citizen science reporting of feral pig sightings in states with few or no known feral swine populations. The campaign provides a multi-agency public reporting tool, an outreach and education toolkit, branding guidance, and facilitates rapid response and removal of new feral swine populations.
  - In 2024 WS updated the *Squeal on Pigs!* application to include reporting of morbidity/mortality that may indicate ASF infection or other foreign animal disease infections. An online training hosted September 5, 2024 introduced the app to federal and state partners, including the morbidity/mortality reporting.

- As of January 2025, there are 25 partner agencies representing seventeen states and provinces – including Alberta, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Hawaii, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Brunswick, New Mexico, Nova Scotia, Ohio, Ontario, Oregon, Saskatchewan, and Wisconsin.
- The app has been downloaded by iPhone and Android users over 4,500 times.
- The Squeal on Pigs! Tagline and graphics were recently trademarked by USDA to ensure only non-profit use of this branding.
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### ***International Collaboration***

- WS collaborates with Mexico and Canada to share information and strategies to prevent international movement of feral swine and foreign animal diseases.
  - The United States Trilateral Feral Swine Working Group and Transboundary Working Group continue to collaborate on feral swine priorities
    - The Trilateral Feral Swine Working Group emerged from the Trilateral Committee for Wildlife and Ecosystem Conservation and Management Meeting. The working group is composed of North American leaders in feral swine management from Mexico, the United States, and Canada. The Working Group is developing a path forward on a shared framework for feral swine control in North America.
    - The transboundary Working Group is a collaborative effort between the National Feral Swine Program, northern border state agencies and provinces from the U.S. and Canada, coordinating efforts, sharing information, and preventing transboundary movement of feral swine.
- WS also provides leadership in the development of international outreach and tabletop exercises (Pacific Northwest Economic Region Annual Summit tabletop), field training workshops (Voyageur Provincial Park, Ontario; Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, Calgary)
- WS also collaborates with the European Union, Australia, and the Asia Pacific region to share information and identify best practices in ASF eradication.

### ***Research***

- Feral Swine Genetic Archive – Presently 52,000 unique samples; 25,000 genotyped to date
  - Especially valuable tool in identifying source populations and tracking illegal movement of swine. Over the past year, support from the Feral Swine Genetic Archive has been requested by law enforcement agencies in Michigan and Mississippi to help enforce prohibitions on the possession and/or transport of feral swine.
  - Will allow us to determine source of recently detected pigs in ME.
- Chronic Wasting Disease: Program collaborations continue to look at possible roles feral swine serve in the dispersal of chronic wasting disease.
  - Current findings suggest wild pigs take up CWD prions. Additional research will explore if feral swine can move prions by depositing them onto the landscape in their feces.

### ***Feral Swine Toxicant Research***

- As previously reported, WS did not move forward in an attempt to register HOGGONE 2 to the EPA because our field trials revealed unacceptable levels of nontarget take of passerine birds that consumed HOGGONE 2 toxic bait that was spilled by feral swine as they consumed the bait. This was decided in the best interests of Wildlife Services and our stakeholders.

- We remain committed to pursuing a feral swine toxicant that meets regulatory requirements and will be an effective management tool for feral swine.
- To meet the needs of the APHIS WS Program and our stakeholders, a feral swine toxicant must meet the following requirements for operational field use:
  - a. Rapid-acting product with high lethality for feral swine
  - b. Low risks for non-target species
  - c. Ease of use for applicators
  - d. Good shelf stability
  - e. Cost effective
  - f. Manufactured in the U.S. with  $\geq 75\%$  U.S.-sourced materials to meet Buy American Act requirements
- We have demonstrated sodium nitrite (SN) to be a useful active ingredient for a feral swine toxicant and remain committed to exploring different formulations of an SN toxic bait. Currently, WS is pursuing the following potential options for future SN toxicants:
  - WS continues to communicate with Animal Control Technologies, Australia (ACTA), the company we have worked with on an SN toxicant since the inception of our effort. ACTA has reported that they filed a provisional patent regarding the use of microencapsulated SN as a top-dressing or mixture added to dry feed (corn/oats) as a toxicant for omnivores. How this will impact WS-NWRC SN product development is uncertain at this time, we are awaiting more information about the patent content. Our in-progress research will continue as is. ACTA has thus far chosen not to engage and reformulate to meet our needs (i.e., reduce spillage, increase palatability to shorten pre-bait period, and increase stability), nor have they engaged in discussions about entering into a new CRADA.
  - A year ago, WS reached out to LSU to learn more about their recently patented product and identify potential opportunities to assist them with the EPA-required studies mandated to be conducted under an Experimental Use Permit (EUP) to obtain the data needed to be evaluated by the EPA as part of the registration process. LSU continues to consider all options for their product and has not requested USDA collaboration or assistance at this time.
  - WS NWRC is actively exploring new SN formulations and delivery strategies, in manners that do not infringe on current patented products. Any new or reformulated product would need to be studied in pen and field trials prior to seeking an EUP. NWRC has initiated testing of potential formulations with feral and domestic swine in pens to evaluate whether they merit field testing.
- We recognize that Kaput, the warfarin-based toxicant, was recently registered in Texas and is available for use. At this time, data on use of this product do not support our operational needs for a rapidly acting control method with low operational cost.