



Florida Feral Swine Trappers

Feral Swine in Florida

- 1 Million or More
- Impact on Region
- Economic Concerns

Hunting and Trapping Feral Swine

- Population Control
- Disease Spread
- Habitat Destruction
- Sport/Hobby

Diseases in Feral Swine

- Swine Brucellosis
- Pseudorabies
- Leptospirosis
- Trichinosis
- Classical Swine Fever

Feral Swine in Florida

Swine are not a native American livestock species. They were introduced by settlers from Spain and Europe. Regardless of the source, their numbers have grown to where there are now an estimated 4 million feral swine in over 39 states. Although some of the animals have a distinctive “wild boar” appearance, others may look no different than many breeds of domestic hogs. Where they do well, they have a clear-cut negative impact on that region causing widespread damage to the natural environment and domestic animals through competition for food, habitat destruction and potential disease spread. It is estimated there are over 1 million of these animals in Florida today.

The monetary costs to the state due to habitat damaged by swine can be considerable. Wild hogs are capable of producing two litters per year and are difficult to control. To minimize the threat of wild pigs to domestic swine herds, producers should take precautions to prevent the commingling of feral swine with domestic swine.

Hunting and Trapping Feral Swine

Hunting and trapping feral swine is not only a popular sport in Florida but a useful tool in man’s attempt to control feral populations on private and state lands. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has established regulations as a means of controlling the spread of disease in the domestic swine population. Through these regulations, Florida has been able to maintain its status as Swine Brucellosis free and Pseudorabies free in its commercial production swine herds.

Individuals trapping feral swine in Florida must register with the Department as a Feral Swine Dealer (FSD). The registered FSD will receive an identification card that must be carried when moving feral swine. This card is good for one year. The dealer must also keep accurate records of all swine movements and make them available to any law enforcement officer or authorized agent of the Department upon request. These records must include movement date, where the animals were trapped, number of animals, and destination. The registered FSD must limit relocation to areas or premises where there will be no direct contact with domestic swine herds. Final disposition of captured feral swine shall be restricted as follows:

1. Movement to Slaughter;
2. Movement to a Game Reserve; or
3. Movement to an Approved Feral Swine Holding Facility (FSHF).

If feral swine are held on private property, the premises must be registered with the Department as a FSHF which must meet the following requirements:

1. Facility is maintained in a clean and sanitary condition at all times;
2. Facility is maintained in such condition as to prevent escape of captured swine;
3. Facility is not located adjacent to domestic swine herds;
4. Facility will hold only feral swine. No other animals (including cats and dogs) can have direct contact with feral swine;
5. Facility owner/operator must maintain records on all feral swine entering and leaving for one year and are required to make them available to an authorized representative of the Department when requested; and
6. Facility owner/operator is registered as an FSD.

Diseases in Feral Swine

Feral swine carry several transmissible diseases, including Brucellosis, Pseudorabies, Leptospirosis, Trichinosis, and Classical Swine Fever, that can be transmitted to domestic livestock or humans.

Swine Brucellosis is caused by a bacterium. While the disease is rarely fatal, individuals remain infected and may spread disease for years. Feral swine are most often the source of Brucellosis infection in domestic swine and cattle. Feral swine trappers and hunters can also contract Swine Brucellosis by handling infected tissue. Signs of a Brucellosis infection in humans are “flu-like” symptoms with recurring fever, chills, joint and muscle pains.

Pseudorabies is a viral disease carried by feral swine that can lead to high death rates in domestic pigs and may affect other domestic and wild animals. While humans are not in danger of becoming sick from the virus, death can occur in hunting dogs that are exposed to infected feral pigs.

Leptospirosis is also a bacterial infection that leads to “flu-like” symptoms or hepatitis in man after exposure to water or tissues contaminated with the urine of infected animals.

Trichinosis is a parasitic disease of public health importance. Human infections are caused by eating infected meat that has not been cooked thoroughly.

Classical Swine Fever is a foreign animal disease that, if introduced in this country, could easily be spread by feral swine. Because of the threat of transmission of this and other diseases, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Animal Industry, has programs in place for surveillance testing of feral swine and other swine that are considered high risk for contracting these diseases such as garbage-fed swine.

Hunters are at risk of becoming infected with Swine Brucellosis, Leptospirosis, and Trichinosis if precautions are not taken when they dress feral pigs. Safety measures should include: wearing disposable gloves when dressing and cleaning pigs, avoiding direct contact with blood and reproductive organs, burying or burning gloves and remains from the dressed hog, cleaning up with hot water and soap after butchering, and thoroughly cooking meat from these animals prior to eating.

To learn more, contact:
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www.doacs.state.fl.us/ai



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