

What Is Being Done?

Wildlife Services, part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), is conducting a national program to manage the damage caused by invasive feral swine through the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program. Our main goal with this program is to protect agricultural and natural resources, property, animal health, and human health and safety by reducing feral swine damage in the United States and its territories. Through a coordinated national effort, we work closely with partners at the Federal, State, and local levels to address the extensive damage caused by feral swine populations.

What Can I Do?

Feral swine cause problems by damaging native ecosystems, preying on or competing with native wildlife, and spreading diseases.

- If you live in a State with no or low populations of feral swine, report any sightings, signs, or damage to the wildlife or agriculture officials in your State.
- Do not relocate feral swine to new areas or transport them to other States.
- Share the knowledge, spread the word, and discourage the transportation and spread of feral swine.



Large sounder wallowing, damaging habitat



Want To Learn More?

Call the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services program in your State at **1-866-4-USDA-WS** or go to **www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife-damage/stopferalswine** to learn more about the problems caused by this invasive animal, as well as to seek advice and assistance in dealing with feral swine.



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FERAL SWINE:

Impacts to Native Wildlife

What Are Feral Swine and Where Are They Found?



Feral swine were first introduced to the United States by Spanish explorers in the 1500s. Natural breeding, new introductions, and relocation by humans caused populations to expand rapidly. Feral swine can thrive in almost any habitat, mature at 6–8 months of age, and a single sow can have up to 2 litters of 4–12 piglets a year, making them a prime example of an invasive species. Feral swine populations encroach on many important wildlife habitats, causing significant damages to these ecosystems. Feral swine also damage the quality of lands for ranching, recreation, and other uses. Habitats and ecosystems impacted by feral swine populations are of incredible importance to many threatened and endangered species, further jeopardizing these already vulnerable species. Feral swine also live in habitats of importance to deer, turkeys, upland birds, and other valuable game species, which poses a risk of economic loss to businesses that depend on these valuable game species.

How Do Feral Swine Impact Native Wildlife and Plants?

Feral swine are one of the world's worst invasive species. It has been estimated that feral swine have played a role in the decline of nearly 300 native plants and animals in the United States alone. Over 250 of these species are threatened or endangered, while others are valuable game animals or important native forage plants. Feral swine impact native species and ecosystems in a variety of ways, from direct predation or competition to altering ecosystems and destroying habitats through their destructive foraging, trampling, and wallowing behaviors.



Young wildlife, like fawns, are particularly vulnerable to feral swine predation.

DIRECT IMPACTS

Feral swine are opportunistic omnivores that prey on the nests, eggs, and young of native wildlife such as sea turtles, prairie chickens, wild turkeys, alligators, and upland game birds. They also prey on both the young and adults of small vertebrate species such as rodents, amphibians, and reptiles like the endangered dunes sagebrush lizard. They root out and eat amphibians and invertebrates from ground cover, threatening species such as the flatwoods salamander. They tear up grasses, shrubs, and seedlings, killing sensitive plants such as Mead's milkweed. Feral swine compete with native wildlife for many key resources. Their keen sense of smell, tenacious feeding behaviors, and ability to digest a variety of foods makes them serious competitors with native wildlife for nutritional resources. They consume the fruits, nuts, and seeds of trees, thereby competing with deer, turkeys, black bears, and small mammals such as squirrels. Feral swine are aggressive animals and will actively chase off other species. Their generally disruptive behavior, particularly around feeding or wallowing areas, will disturb and scatter other animals. For example, the endangered Houston toad will avoid breeding in ponds the feral swine use for wallowing.



Feral swine preying on ground-nesting bird eggs

INDIRECT IMPACTS

Feral swine are ecosystem engineers, which means they can change their environment. Feral swine can have an immense impact on the vegetation and soils throughout their range. They are changing the distribution of plants in many grasslands and forests and are destroying habitat for rare insects such as the Hine's emerald dragonfly. High consumption of nuts and seeds, along with rooting and rubbing behaviors, can even impact forest growth, particularly in oak

forests. Feral swine aid in the spread of invasive plant species, such as strawberry guava, by disturbing the native plants and transporting seeds of invasive weeds. They alter runoff and water quality in wetland environments, through rooting and wallowing, which impacts fish species such as the Oskaloosa darter. Feral swine carry over 30 pathogens and 40 parasites, many of which can infect wildlife.



Feral swine rooting protected sea turtle nest to eat eggs

FAR-REACHING IMPACTS

Feral swine eat mostly vegetation, but recent research shows they will prey on native wildlife. Feral swine have been known to consume the eggs of ground-nesting birds, reptiles, or amphibians; the young of large mammals such as deer; and both the young and adults of small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

Habitat change, through their wallowing, rooting, and feeding, is the most widespread and harmful impact of feral swine to native wildlife. Feral swine alter wetland and riparian habitats, pollute water, change vegetation composition and distribution, and displace native wildlife across the United States.