

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).

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



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

mobile and 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 to avoid humans. Similarly, trapping small numbers of hogs only

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FIGURE 2. Feral hogs captured in a corral trap.

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

educates non-trapped hogs and does little to lower the population. Corral trapping, in which entire families of hogs are captured at one time (Figure 2), can be very effective, although trapping requires an investment in equipment and a time commitment. 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. The use of dogs 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.

The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Wildlife Services conducts a feral hog management program on public lands with cooperation from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. In 2010, they reported, “experience and research has led us to conclude that population control efforts will not adequately address feral hog problems unless enforcement of existing laws and regulations successfully stops the translocation and trafficking now occurring” (Thurman Booth, USDA Wildlife Services – Arkansas state director, personal communication, March 25, 2010).

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services, Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission, Arkansas Department of Agriculture, the Arkansas Forest Resources Center, and other agencies and organizations have partnered in an effort to educate the public and reduce the wild hog population in the state.

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 Commission 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 Commission is responsible for establishing and enforcing regulations for domestic livestock, including feral hogs. According to their website (<http://alpc.arkansas.gov/>), the Commission has full authority for the control, suppression, and eradication of livestock and poultry diseases and pests. They administer the provisions of laws and regulations pertaining to livestock and poultry. The Commission is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with several federal agencies in matters relating to livestock and poultry disease control programs.

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.”

- 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. Because feral hogs often inhabit wildlife management areas and are an invasive species under state law, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission allows the incidental take of feral hogs while in legal pursuit of other wildlife. 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 for wildlife damage management. Wildlife Services partners with other state and federal agencies to conduct feral hog removal on public land and monitors feral hog diseases in the state. There are a limited number of Wildlife Services field personnel in Arkansas who cover a variety of wildlife damage issues. Wildlife Services hopes to be able to offer on-site assistance on private lands for feral hog control in the near future. They can also provide technical assistance to landowners over the telephone or through publications.
- 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 Tayasuidae families of mammals. Those from the Suidae family include domestic swine, Russian boars and European boars. Those from the Tayasuidae family include peccary and javelina.

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.

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, 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 harvested on 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. At the time of publication, these counties are **Boone, Carroll, Johnson, Logan, Madison, Marion, Newton, Pope, Searcy and Yell**. 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 (800-364-4263). Bait may be used to hunt deer and elk on private land from September 1 to December 31.
- 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. On a few WMAs, feral hogs may be taken while pursuing any wildlife during a daytime hunting season. 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 must be either killed immediately or permanently identified by ear tag and transported to a terminal facility in compliance with state law. If a feral hog is captured on private property and not moved from the private property, the landowner is not required to kill the feral hog immediately. For example, a feral hog could be fed for weight gain before butchering, or 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.

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 on *private land* 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 30 days.
- A person convicted of releasing a hog on *public land* is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of \$1,000 to \$5,000 for each hog released, and/or revocation of Arkansas hunting and fishing licenses for up to 5 years.

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.

Other Control Methods

Other methods for controlling feral hogs not described in this publication are likely illegal. It must be a legally approved method of take according to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Code Book. An unapproved method could endanger non-target wildlife species, domestic animals and/or children. Serious violations could include loss of hunting privileges and 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.

Ownership Is Illegal

Transporting and/or selling a live feral hog is illegal in the state. 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. The Arkansas Code specifically excludes the University of Arkansas Razorbacks' mascot from state law (Figure 3).

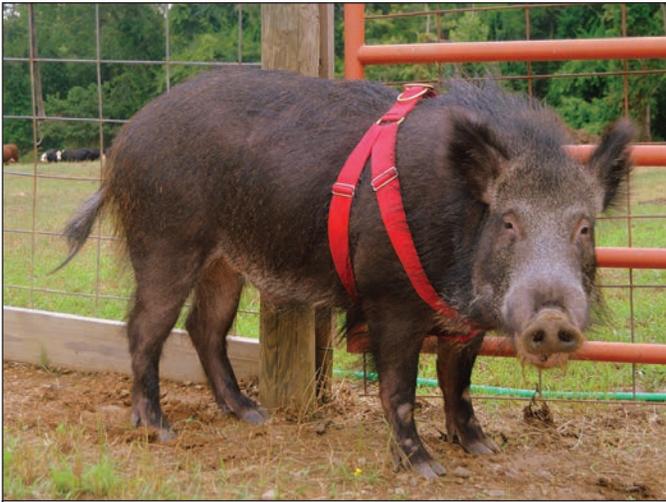


FIGURE 3. The University of Arkansas Razorbacks' mascot, Tusk, is not considered a feral hog.
Photo courtesy Razorback Athletics

Transporting Feral Hogs

Only dead feral hogs may be transported to meat processors. An exception is a live feral hog which is immediately tagged and transported to a terminal facility. Feral hogs must be dead when leaving a terminal facility. Hog hunting businesses are allowed to continue operating as a terminal facility if established before the state law became effective in August 2013. Hog hunting operations must be certified by the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission as a terminal facility to receive and release feral hogs inside hog-proof fences as part of their operation. Rules and regulations about transporting live feral hogs only to terminal facilities are very specific and limited to those having special permits issued through the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission. For additional information, contact the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission (501-907-2400).

Consuming Pork From Feral Hogs

Pork from feral hogs may be consumed by whoever killed the animal or given away for consumption. It is highly recommended that hunters contact the processor prior to delivering a hog. Some processors may not take swine, while others need advance notification for switching their operation

from deer or cattle to swine processing. 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.edu.

Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry is a nonprofit organization that accepts donations of wild game taken to commercial processors participating in the program. The meat is ground and distributed to people in need in the local community. Besides donating meat, hunters or anyone can help by paying the processing fee either directly to the processor or to Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry. Oftentimes processors charge a modest fee for processing such donations as their contribution to the program. A donation paid to Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry, a 501(c)(3) organization, is tax deductible. The organization's website lists processors accepting donations (www.arkansashunters.org), or you can call 501-282-0006.

Pork from Arkansas feral hogs may not be sold directly 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 except to terminal facilities, commercial sale of inspected feral hog meat is not occurring in Arkansas at this time.

Resources

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

Feral Hog Hunting Regulations, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, <http://www.agfc.com>

Additional Assistance

Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission, 501-907-2400 (main office), website www.alpc.arkansas.gov

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

USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services – Arkansas Office, 870-673-1121, website [www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife damage/state office/arkansas info.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife%20damage/state%20office/arkansas%20info.shtml)

For more information on feral hogs, go to the Extension website:

Feral Hogs and Their Control

www.uaex.edu/feralhogs

If you do not have Internet access, visit your local library to find publications and websites mentioned in this fact sheet on the Internet, or contact the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service state office at 501-671-2000 to locate a county Extension office near you.

Disclaimer

Because state and federal laws are subject to change, contact the area manager if hunting on public land, or refer to a local wildlife officer, an Arkansas hunting guidebook or an Arkansas Game and Fish Commission office (800-364-4263, www.agfc.com) for current information.

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