



Feral swine carry diseases that infect humans, domestic animals and wildlife. They destroy property and habitat and threaten commercial pork producers.

WHAT ARE FERAL SWINE?

Feral swine are an injurious, non-native, recently introduced, invasive species in Pennsylvania. Any member of the Family *Suidae* roaming freely upon public or private land is a feral swine. Feral swine appearances vary greatly; they are descendants of domestic pigs, Eurasian wild boars, and European and Asian hogs that have escaped or been intentionally released. They may weigh more than 400 pounds and are very prolific, producing litters of 8 to 12 young.

WHERE ARE THEY IN PA?

Damage caused by feral swine to wildlife, habitat and property has been reported in the Southwest, Southcentral and Northeast regions of the state. For the most recent updates, call the appropriate Game Commission region office. All feral swine sightings should be reported to the appropriate Game Commission Region Office to be verified, recorded and addressed.

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

Feral swine are an extremely destructive, non-native, and invasive species that threaten the Commonwealth's natural resources (including wildlife and their habitats), agricultural industry (including crops and livestock production), forest products industry and human health. Specifically, they are a danger to the health of wildlife and domestic animals, they are a threat to the pork industry, and they are carriers of diseases and parasites that can infect humans. Without successful eradication efforts, feral swine will change the face of the Commonwealth's habitat and, in turn, its wildlife populations. A permanent feral swine population will also change the way the agricultural industry operates and create additional human health concerns.

WHAT ARE THE HUMAN HEALTH CONCERNS?

Feral swine showing exposure to diseases have been discovered in Pennsylvania. Feral swine are known to carry 18 viral diseases—10 of which can infect people, and 10 bacterial diseases—all of which cause disease in humans. Feral swine are reservoirs for numerous parasites that can affect people, pets, livestock and wildlife.

People usually contract ailments carried by feral swine through contact with affected blood, tissues or aerosol droplets, or by consuming undercooked meat from infected animals. It is also possible for these diseases to be contracted through exposure to other animals that were, originally, infected by feral swine. Disease symptoms range widely, from flu-like ailments to fever, weight loss, organ failure and death.

It should be noted that while the highly pathogenic avian influenza has not been found in North America, in the event that it were, feral swine could play a significant role in the evolution and transmission of influenza viruses.

ARE THEY A THREAT TO WILDLIFE?

Feral swine pose a significant, imminent and unacceptable threat to our wildlife and their habitats. They can harbor a large number of infectious diseases, some of which can be fatal to wildlife. By rooting and wallowing, feral swine destroy critical wildlife habitat, eliminating native plant populations and causing erosion, especially along waterways and wetlands. Feral swine compete for food with deer, bears, turkeys, squirrels and many other birds and mammals. They can be predators of small mammals and even deer fawns.

WHAT'S BEING DONE?

Because the introduction of feral swine to Pennsylvania is recent, the establishment of a permanent population may still be countered through decisive efforts to eradicate feral swine. Many agencies and organizations are working together as the Pennsylvania Feral Swine Task Force, these groups include: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, US Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Game Commission, PennAg Industry Association, Penn State University, Pennsylvania Audubon Society, Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council and others.

Trapping is, by far, the most effective means of removing feral swine. Thus, the Wildlife Services Division of the US Department of Agriculture's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service and the Pennsylvania Game Commission, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Trappers Association, are collaborating to trap feral swine and collect blood and tissue samples for disease testing.

The US Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Pork Producers Council are sponsoring research on feral swine populations in Pennsylvania and providing monetary support for eradication efforts.

Licensed hunters and trappers may participate in the taking of feral swine in any county where protection has been removed.

WHAT IS THEIR LEGAL STATUS?

Feral swine are protected mammals in Pennsylvania and, thus, are under the authority of the Game Commission. However, the agency has removed protection statewide, except in counties where official eradication trapping operations are occurring. Contact a Game Commission region office for a list of protected counties. It is illegal to interfere with any official eradication trapping efforts.

In any county where protection has been removed, however, licensed hunters and trappers may take feral swine. Takings of feral swine must be reported to the appropriate Game Commission region office within 24 hours. It is illegal to release any animal that is a member of the Family *Suidae* into the wild.

FARMER CONCERNS

Feral swine are known to disrupt livestock and damage fences and feeders. They will consume animal feed, minerals and supplements; cause large amounts of crop damage; and prey on small livestock such as lambs, kid goats and newborn calves.

Feral swine are known to carry several infectious diseases that affect livestock. Swine brucellosis, pseudorabies and trichinosis can infect domestic pigs and other farm animals. Pseudorabies is fatal to domestic livestock. To protect domestic animals from these diseases, farmers should not introduce feral swine into domestic herds and should not butcher feral swine on the farm or feed the remains of feral swine to their domestic animals.

Feral swine sightings should be reported to the local regional office. Feral swine may be destroyed for agricultural or property protection without possession of a hunting or trapping license. The humane dispatch of all feral swine is encouraged. All dispatched feral swine should be reported immediately to the Game Commission so they can be tested for diseases of concern. It is illegal to release any member of the Family *Suidae* into the wild. Importing or relocating feral swine which have not been tested immediately prior to movement for infectious diseases is a violation of state and federal laws.

LANDOWNER CONCERNS

Feral swine are known to disrupt livestock and damage fences and feeders. They will consume animal feed, minerals and supplements; cause large amounts of crop damage; and prey on small livestock such as lambs, kid goats and newborn calves.

Feral swine are known to carry several infectious diseases that affect livestock. Swine brucellosis, pseudorabies and trichinosis can infect domestic pigs and other farm animals. Pseudorabies is fatal to cattle. To protect domestic animals from these diseases, farmers should not introduce feral swine into domestic herds and should not butcher feral swine on the farm or feed the remains of feral swine to their domestic animals. It is illegal to release any animal that is a member of the Family *Suidae* into the wild. Importing or relocating feral swine which have not been tested immediately prior to movement for infectious diseases is a violation of state and federal laws.

Feral swine may be destroyed for agricultural or property protection without possession of a hunting or trapping license. The humane dispatch of all feral swine is encouraged.

HUNTER CONCERNS

Eradication of feral swine in the Commonwealth is the goal. Licensed hunters and trappers may participate in the taking of feral swine with a firearm, bow or crossbow, in counties where protection has been removed, and are encouraged to do so. Although there are many restrictions on the taking of feral swine, as a general rule, takings in conformance within the limitations of deer hunting are authorized. In order to avoid the appearance of impropriety while participating in the taking of feral swine, hunters and trappers should comply with whatever game regulations (licensing, blaze orange and other safety requirements) are in effect at the time. Individuals may not kill feral swine on Sundays, nor over bait. Takings of feral swine must be reported to the appropriate Game Commission Region Office within 24 hours. Sightings should also be reported to the local regional office.

Though feral swine are protected mammals in Pennsylvania, protection has been removed statewide, except in counties where official eradication trapping is occurring. Protected areas change; a list of counties where feral swine are currently protected can be found at www.pgc.state.pa.us or by calling a Game Commission region office. Feral swine are protected in areas being trapped because they are very adaptable and a small amount of pressure will cause them to vacate one area and move onto another, thus inhibiting trapping efforts. It is illegal to interfere with any official eradication trapping efforts.

It is illegal to release any member of the Family *Suidae* into the wild. Importing or relocating feral swine that have not been tested immediately prior to movement for infectious diseases is a violation of state and federal laws.

FIELD DRESSING AND HANDLING PRECAUTIONS

Feral swine are known to carry brucellosis, pseudorabies and trichinosis. Therefore, each animal should be treated as if it were infected. Exposure to diseases carried by feral swine can occur when an animal is processed; humans can contract diseases such as brucellosis from handling the tissues of infected animals. Consequently, the following precautions should be taken:

- Wear disposable rubber or latex gloves when field dressing and butchering
- Avoid direct contact with blood and reproductive organs
- Keep pets away from swine carcasses; pets can be fatally infected through exposure to infected blood or tissue
- Immediately wash hands with soap and hot water after field dressing or butchering
- Wash tools with soap and hot water after field dressing or butchering and soak for a half-hour in a solution of bleach water (3/4 cup bleach per gallon of water)
- Properly dispose of gloves and burn or bury any animal remains
- As with all pork products, cook feral swine meat thoroughly – to a temperature of 170 degrees F – before eating

PA PORK INDUSTRY CONCERNS

Feral swine are a biosecurity threat to the pork industry; they are susceptible to and known carriers of swine brucellosis, pseudorabies and trichinosis. Though these diseases have been nearly eliminated from US commercial-production herds, reinfection through infected feral swine is a serious concern. It is illegal to release any animal that is a member of the Family *Suidae* into the wild. Importing or relocating feral swine which have not been tested immediately prior to movement for infectious diseases is a violation of state and federal laws. The humane dispatch of all feral swine is encouraged.

Brucellosis is a bacterial disease that causes abortions in sows and infertility in boars, leading to low reproduction – and profit loss. Brucellosis can be transmitted to humans as well as domestic pigs and other livestock, primarily through infected reproductive discharges (afterbirth and semen of infected animals). Infection can be identified only through blood testing, and there is no effective treatment. Infected animals are lifetime carriers of the disease.

Pseudorabies is caused by a herpes virus, but is not related to the rabies virus. It does not affect humans. In species other than swine, pseudorabies attacks the nervous system, causing intense itching, paralysis and even death. Pseudorabies weakens pigs and consequently increases their susceptibility to other problems; it also causes abortions and stillbirths. The disease is also fatal to cattle, sheep, goats, dogs and cats, and wildlife such as raccoons, skunks, opossums and small rodents. Infection can be detected only by blood testing and there is no effective treatment. Once infected, animals are lifetime carriers of the disease.

Trichinosis, which is caused by a parasitic roundworm, can be carried undetected in the muscle tissue of swine. It can become a chronic and debilitating disease affecting the neurologic and cardiac systems of people who have ingested infected and improperly cooked pork.

There is a large overlap between known feral swine populations and the locations of commercial pork producers. Feral swine are known to frequently seek contact with domestic swine. To protect domestic herds from infectious diseases:

- Provide fencing to eliminate all contact between domestic and feral swine or keep domestic pigs confined within buildings
- Do not introduce feral swine into domestic herds
- Perform state and federal blood tests before transporting breeding pigs
- Blood test and quarantine all new pigs before introducing them to present herds
- Do not butcher feral swine on the farm or feed the remains of feral swine to domestic animals
- Collect and burn or bury all waste from butchering

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture 717-772-2852
US Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services 717-236-9451

Pennsylvania Game Commission Region Offices
Northwest 814-432-3187 Southcentral 814-643-1831
Southwest 724-238-9523 Northeast 570-675-1143
Northcentral 570-398-4744 Southeast 610-926-3136