

Feral Hog Management

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Feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) are an old world species belonging to the family Suidae, and in Texas include European wild hogs, feral hogs, and European-feral crossbreeds. Feral hogs are domestic hogs that either escaped or were released for hunting purposes. With each generation, the hog's domestic characteristics diminish and they develop the traits needed for survival in the wild. Burleson County is no stranger to feral hogs and the damage that they can cause.

Texas is home to nearly 2 million feral hogs, the largest feral hog population in the U.S. Because of their destructive feeding habits and potential to spread disease, feral hogs are a substantial liability to agriculture and native wildlife in Texas. Texas Agrilife Extension Service estimates that statewide annual economic damage caused by feral hogs is \$51.7 million. Unless aggressive measures are taken, the problem is expected to worsen in the years ahead.

In 2006-07, the Texas Department of Agriculture funded a Pilot Project through the Texas Cooperative Extension to study and measure the economic impact of managing feral hogs within agricultural enterprises at three pilot sites. This project was designed to help determine the economic effectiveness of feral hog management and not a feral hog

eradication program. Results indicated that over 3,000 feral hogs were removed and landowners/agricultural producers saved nearly \$3 million from implementation of this project.

In 2008-09, TDA was appropriated \$1 million for a two-year grant program to fund a long-term statewide feral hog abatement strategy. A project to implement innovative, sustainable integrated pest management strategies for controlling and reducing feral hog populations will soon be implemented. The farmers, ranchers and landowners of Burleson County are anxiously awaiting that date.