

## **WILD PIG FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What are wild pigs?**

Wild pigs are an exotic, invasive species that pose serious economic, ecological, and disease-related threats. Simply put, wild pigs are any free-ranging swine not contained in a proper enclosure. Eurasian boar, domestic pigs, and their hybrids are all the same species, *Sus scrofa*. All loose pigs, regardless of ancestry, can cause irreparable damage to the environment.

### **What is the difference between a domestic pig and a wild pig?**

Domestic pigs are contained on a farm, do not cross property boundaries, and undergo proper disease testing and vaccinations. Wild pigs are free-roaming, unvaccinated pigs that destroy property. Released domestic pigs can become just as destructive as wild pigs if not captured quickly. If you see a pig free-roaming, where it shouldn't be, call KDFWR at 800-858-1549 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Eastern) on weekdays or go to [fw.ky.gov/wildpigs](http://fw.ky.gov/wildpigs) and click on "report".

### **What do wild pigs look like?**

Wild pigs show significant variability in color, body shape, and size. Most wild pigs are black or brown, but any color, or combination of colors can occur. In Kentucky, adult pigs usually weigh between 75-200 pounds. Due to crossbreeding, some wild pigs have physical traits similar to Eurasian wild boar, such as long coarse hair, broad shoulders, and grizzled coat coloration.

### **Does Kentucky have Eurasian or Russian wild boar?**

No, wild pigs in Kentucky are the result of released domestic pigs and hybrids of domestic and Eurasian or Russian boar. There are no pure strain Eurasian or Russian wild boar in Kentucky.

### **What problems do wild pigs cause?**

- **Damage wildlife**

Wild pigs are a highly destructive pest species that cause irreparable damage to Kentucky's wildlife communities and natural resources. They eat almost anything, outcompeting native wildlife for food. They are especially fond of acorns, robbing many species of an important fall food source. Wild pigs prey on small animals such as invertebrates, amphibians, and reptiles. They also destroy nests and consume eggs of ground-nesting birds, such as turkey, quail, and woodcock.

- **Damage wildlife habitat**

Their rooting and trampling behavior disrupts native plant communities and furthers the spread of invasive species. They destroy forests by pulling up tree seedlings, eating acorns, and rooting up plants. They create wallows and degrade wetlands through siltation and fecal deposition.

- **Damage agriculture**

Wild pigs cause extensive damage to agricultural crops, food plots, and hayfields. They can destroy many acres overnight, devastating agricultural producers. They can transmit diseases to livestock,

kill young livestock, and contaminate livestock feed. Their rooting behavior also can create holes or ruts in fields that damage farm equipment, cause soil erosion, and lead to stream sedimentation.

- **Impact hunter harvest**

Much to the dismay of our sportsmen and women, wild pigs displace white-tailed deer and wild turkey, negatively affecting hunter harvest. Deer and turkey cannot compete with wild pigs. Deer and turkey leave the area when wild pigs are present.

- **Spread disease**

Wild pigs are one of the most active carriers of wildlife-related diseases. As many as 45 diseases and parasites are transmissible by wild pigs, some of which are deadly to people, pets, livestock, or native wildlife. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has confirmed the presence of both swine brucellosis and pseudorabies in Kentucky. Other diseases associated with wild pigs include E. coli, leptospirosis, listeria, toxoplasmosis, trichinosis, and tuberculosis. These diseases commonly cause abortions, low milk production, infertility, and high mortality in newborn domestic animals. The domestic swine industry is free of both swine brucellosis and pseudorabies. The reintroduction of these diseases into domestic livestock could be devastating to the agricultural industry.

### **What does wild pig sign look like?**

- **Wild Pig Tracks**

Wild pig tracks are very similar to white-tailed deer. It can often be difficult to differentiate between the two. However, deer tracks are spear-shaped with dewclaws directly in line with the hoof print. Pig tracks are slightly rounder and wider with dewclaws angled outside of the hoof print.

- **Wallows**

Wild pigs create muddy areas known as “wallows” in wet areas to get relief from biting insects and heat from the sun.

- **Tree rubs**

Mud rubbed on tree bark, roughly a foot or two off the ground, is often indicative of a wild pig presence

- **Scat**

Scat (feces) varies in shape and consistency depending on diet and the season. Droppings are often round or tubular and contain grasses, hard mast, and other plant material.

- **Rooting**

Rooting often resembles ground worked over with a garden tiller. It usually covers a large area.

### **How can I differentiate between damage from wild pigs and damage from other wildlife species?**

Wild pigs completely flatten corn stalks via trampling. Raccoons climb corn stalks breaking them off a couple feet off the ground. White-tailed deer also damage soybeans, corn, and alfalfa. Deer nip the buds from new lush growth, essentially killing the plant. Older plants depredated by deer will have a rough appearance. A deer's lack of upper incisors causes them to grab the stem and pull rather than bite cleanly through the stem. While deer can certainly knock entire corn stalks down, they generally cause little damage to the stalk once it is mature. Skunks dig cone-shaped holes in fields looking for grubs and earthworms. Pig rooting covers a much larger area and looks like a garden tiller. Rolled sod is generally the work of raccoons searching for earthworms and larvae.

### **What is the cost of wild pig damage nationwide?**

A conservative estimate of the annual economic impact caused by wild pigs in the U.S. is \$2.5 billion.

### **How did wild pigs get here?**

Wild pig populations did not naturally expand into KY. Every population is a result of illegal release. In some cases, misguided hunters intentionally released them in an effort to create new hunting opportunities. Some wild pigs were a result of negligent owners who allowed their pigs to run free or who released them intentionally when they could no longer care for them.

### **Do wild pigs live in family groups?**

Multiple generations of related sows (females) and piglets live in groups called "sounders". Adult males (boars) travel alone and occasionally join sounders to breed. Male piglets leave the sounder around 16 months of age.

### **How fast do populations grow?**

Wild pigs are prolific breeders. They reach sexual maturity at 5-10 months old. Females can give birth twice a year with an average of 3-8 piglets each litter. Leaving just a few sows on the landscape can quickly result in a huge population increase.

### **What regulations address wild pigs?**

- **KRS 150.186**

Prohibits the release of pigs into the wild. Prohibits the importation, possession, or transportation of any wild or feral pig, Eurasian or Russian boar, or hybrids, whether born in the wild or captivity. Accidental escape of livestock exempted.

- **KRS 150.990 (17)**

Any person convicted of violating KRS 150.186 shall be guilty of a Class A misdemeanor and shall, whether licensed or license-exempt, forfeit his or her right to hunt, fish, trap, or be licensed as a commercial guide for ten years.

### **Where can I hunt wild pigs?**

In an effort to stop the spread of wild pigs, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife discourages wild pig hunting and does not share wild pig location information.

**Why doesn't the department promote hunting as a strategy to eliminate wild pig populations?**

Although hunting is probably the first thing that comes to mind, it is not an effective means of control. Due to pig's high reproductive rate, hunters would have to harvest 70 percent of the pig population each year just to keep the population from growing. This is very difficult to do with hunting alone. In fact, hunting only removes approximately 30 percent of the population. Therefore, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife asks hunters to refrain from shooting wild pigs.

**Why ask hunters to refrain from shooting wild pigs?**

Wild pigs are the smartest animal in the woods. Shooting into a sounder may remove 1-2 pigs, but it educates the remaining pigs. Hunting pressure forces pigs to become nocturnal, leave the area, and avoid all human activity. This moves the problem elsewhere and makes them difficult to find. By the time they are located, they have increased in numbers.

**What is the department doing about this problem?**

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, in partnership with USDA Wildlife Services, offers free trapping services to anyone experiencing wild pig damage. Trapping by professionals is the most effective method for pig eradication.

**What is the department's goal per wild pig populations?**

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's goal is total eradication of all wild pig populations. Unlike many southern states, Kentucky has few wild pigs left. This gives us the opportunity to eradicate all wild pigs and allow deer, turkey and other native species to return.

**Has the department eradicated any populations of wild pigs?**

Yes, several populations of wild pigs have been successfully eradicated in Kentucky, due to efforts of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, USDA Wildlife Services, and support from hunters and farmers in affected areas.

**How many wild pigs are currently in KY?**

Due to their secretive nature, there is no way to know the exact numbers of wild pigs in Kentucky. However, populations are at the lowest point in the last 10 years, due to aggressive trapping efforts.

**How can I report and stop wild pig damage on my property?**

To report wild pig damage, call 800-858-1549 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Eastern) on weekdays or go to [fw.ky.gov/wildpigs](http://fw.ky.gov/wildpigs) and click on "report".

**How can I help?**

You can help us in this fight by reporting wild pig sightings, damage, or the illegal possession, sale, or release of wild pigs to our department at 800-858-1549 or [fw.ky.gov/wildpigs](http://fw.ky.gov/wildpigs). Refrain from shooting or hunting wild pigs to allow the department to trap them in an efficient manner.