

# Primer for Action on Wild Pigs

There are no native pigs anywhere in BC, so any pig observed outside of a fence or barn is likely a wild pig. Domesticated pigs or swine or wild boar or pot-bellied pigs (and hybrids of these) can all cause severe economical, ecological and human health impacts, including:

## Economical

- » Property damage from forage and wallowing behaviours.
- » Crop loss, enhanced security and fencing, as well as veterinary treatments and immunizations for agricultural producers.
- » Threat to commercial pig farming industry as a vector for African swine fever virus.



Credit: Billy Higginbotham, Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Bugwood.org

## Ecological

- » Long list of potential disease transfer to domestic swine production and other wildlife, including some reportable diseases, such as African Swine Fever, Pseudorabies, Swine Brucellosis and the Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome Virus.
- » They can cause significant damage to habitats due to their forage and wallowing behaviour.
  - Rooting and trampling is very destructive to native flora.
  - Foraging for invertebrates depletes the local ecosystem of vital decomposer populations.
  - Bank erosion and sedimentation of waterways in sensitive areas such as riparian buffers.
  - Water quality is adversely affected, and pathogens can be transferred through water contaminated by feces.
- » Feral pigs compete with native wildlife for food and often predate on smaller animals such as reptiles, bird eggs and eating ducklings, goslings, and other ground nesting birds, small mammals and pets, and the young of deer, goat, sheep, and horses.



Credit: Dr Ryan Brook

## Human Health

- » Feral pigs have the potential to transmit parasites and disease to humans.
- » Hepatitis E virus can infect humans who have consumed water contaminated by feces, as well as having a potential for foodborne transmission by consuming raw or undercooked game meat.
- » E. coli from feral pigs defecating on fruits and vegetables can result in food recalls and human health risks.



Credit: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Bugwood.org

## Social

- » Feral pigs are aggressive with razor sharp tusks and have been known to harass and attack humans.

## Status of Wild Pigs

In Canada, these impacts have established wild pigs as the most prolific, highly invasive, large mammal species and now occupy more than one million square kilometers. In BC, small populations are sparsely distributed within the province. Populations with low numbers are occasionally reported in the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, Thompson-Okanagan, Chilcotin, Peace, and Kootenay regions, often where farming occurs and the animals escape, temporarily. However, large established populations have not been recorded at this time and the least costly and most effective approach for managing wild pigs is to act early.

## What Have Other Jurisdictions Done?

### Alberta

The Alberta government has developed a Wild Boar Control Program as a coordinated approach to eliminating the threat of invasive wild boar. This program expands surveillance and education, created modified bounty programs – both whole sounder trapping incentive program for landowners and trappers and a bounty pilot program in participating counties (no claims as of September 2022) – and compensates wild boar damage to crops.

### Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan government declared feral pigs as a pest under The Pest Control Act. The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) oversees surveillance and eradication efforts through their Feral Wild Boar Control Program which recommends reporting rather than hunting, and coordinates with their authorized personnel (qualified hunters and trappers) to investigate reports and take appropriate control actions.

All Saskatchewan producers are eligible for up to 100 per cent compensation to crops and livestock caused by feral pigs under the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program. Producers can also receive funding for preventative measures to reduce complications with wildlife.

The province also has a Feral Pigs Working Group that is tasked with monitoring of populations to assess distribution and prevalence. It consists of the Ministries of Agriculture (Chair) and Environment, Sask Pork, Saskatchewan Trappers Association, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, and Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM).

## Ontario

The Ontario government collects and monitors reports of invasive wild pig sightings from the public. Based on the sightings reported, they do research that includes on-the-ground follow ups. Where appropriate, ministry staff may trap and remove invasive wild pigs from the environment. New measures have been introduced to phase Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids out of the province by 2024.

Also, as of January 1, 2022, hunting pigs in Ontario is illegal. Landowners (or agents acting on their behalf) have the right to protect their property from damage caused by pigs. A person who captures or kills a pig for protection of property must immediately notify the ministry.

## What Actions Are Needed to Protect BC?

The following actions would aid in the prevention of wild pigs establishing themselves in BC. As this isn't a simple issue, a multi-faceted, collaborative approach would be most effective.

### Prevent Introduction

The most effective way to manage the spread of wild pigs in BC is prevention. Reducing or eliminating the risk of intentional or accidental release is key to preventing their introduction into the environment.

- » Promote best management practices (BMPs) for pig containment and transportation and ensure these BMPs are kept up to date.
- » Develop and deliver outreach around obligations regarding pig escapes.
- » Develop and promote responsible ownership guides for “mini-pigs” and other pet pigs to reduce intentional releases of unwanted pets.

### Coordinate Removal

While prevention is key, being able to locate, identify and eradicate wild pigs before they can establish themselves further is critical once they are in the environment.

- » Organize a central database/strategy to receive reports of wild pig sightings. *\*Wild pigs are currently not present on the Report Invasives app.*
- » Develop an awareness campaign for the public to report sightings.
- » Address any knowledge gaps of wild pig distribution in BC.
- » Develop a management strategy for removal of wild pigs from the environment.

### Continued Collaboration

Wild pigs and their associated threats do not follow borders or jurisdictions. Being able to collaborate and/or coordinate with other jurisdictions, stakeholders and partners will greatly increase the chances of success.

- » Wild pig management is extremely varied. A strong multi-Ministry coordination/collaboration, or a working group, would be greatly beneficial and allows expertise to be leveraged as needed.
- » Look for opportunities to contribute nationally & internationally to invasive wild pig initiatives.
- » Continue to share knowledge across partnerships to ensure continued success in the prevention of wild pigs establishing in BC.