
Title: **Control of Feral Hogs on Wildlife Resources Division Lands** Policy Number:

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Page 1 of 3

Purpose:

Feral swine are non-native invasive animals that are destructive to native species and habitats, forests, wildlife openings, roads and other structures on Georgia Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) lands. Historically, public hunting has been the primary means of control of feral swine populations on WRD lands through incidental take and hog-only hunts. However, in most cases, public hunting alone has shown to be inadequate to effectively control feral swine. To reduce the damage caused by feral swine, WRD employees have employed various techniques to deal with specific damage issues; however, no consistent protocol for these activities had been established. This policy establishes a systematic approach to effectively and efficiently control and eradicate, where feasible, feral swine on WRD lands.

Policy:

A. WRD Land Ranking on Feasibility of Eradication

The state feral hog biologist shall maintain a list of all WRD lands and respective estimations of hog density by each area biologist. The hog density for each WMA is estimated by professional opinion of the area biologist and placed into one of the following categories: not present, intermittent, low, moderate, or high density. The state feral hog biologist shall be responsible for coordinating an update to this list every 3 years. Generally, the following strategies for hog control should be employed based on the category assigned to each WMA:

1. **Not Present or Intermittent** – On WRD lands where hogs are not present or intermittent, staff should immediately execute eradication measures upon discovery of hogs on the area. Trail cameras and systematic searching for hog sign should be used following control efforts to evaluate success.
2. **Low** – On WRD lands with low hog densities, staff should take measures to deal with specific damage issues as a priority. Consideration should be given to potential for eradication, which may depend on hog densities of adjacent lands, available staff and equipment, and efficacy of control measures specific to the area. At a minimum, the goal should be to reduce hog density from low to intermittent.
3. **Medium and High** – On WRD lands with medium and high hog densities, the priority should be controlling specific damage issues. Secondly, hog density should be reduced using the most man-power efficient means available. At a minimum, the goals should be to reduce high density to medium and medium density to low.

B. Planning and Monitoring

Annual work plans for each property should include specific objectives for hog control commensurate with the category for hog density assigned to the area. Monitoring through harvest records, trail cameras, and/or other methods for quantification of hog densities should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of control efforts on an annual basis.

C. Techniques

1. **Shooting** – Shooting from open, improved roads is prohibited. Shooting from closed/gated roads is generally not advised; however, it is not prohibited. Considerations for shooting from a vehicle on closed/gated roads should include whether a hunt is occurring, if a more efficient method exists, and the perception of this activity should a member of the public observe it. In most cases, when hogs are spotted during the normal course of duties, the location should be a candidate for trapping rather than opportunistic shooting.
2. **Trapping** – Whole-sounder trapping is likely the most efficient means of control that WRD staff may use. Remotely monitored/triggered traps are ideal, although corral traps with trip or root triggers may be used. In most cases, box style traps are inefficient and should not be used. The use of box traps should be limited to instances where there are only a few hogs to be trapped or a specific individual is the target (e.g., Not Present or Intermittent densities). All hogs should be killed on site.
3. Control by Non-WRD Persons – Opportunities and situations may arise where control efforts by non-WRD persons may be advantageous.
 - a. USDA-Wildlife Services may be used to assist control efforts where staffing is inadequate to meet goals and budget allows. In some cases, aerial gunning by USDA-Wildlife Services may be an option and WRD staff should coordinate with USDA-Wildlife Services to identify safe areas and times to conduct such activities. Director's approval is required prior to any proposed aerial gunning operations.
 - b. Trapping on WRD lands by non-WRD persons may be permissible at the discretion of the region supervisor. When trapping programs on adjacent lands may benefit from also trapping on nearby WRD lands, permission may be granted in writing. Additionally, permission may be granted to experienced individuals with an interest in trapping at no cost to WRD. Considerations for granting permission should include whether a hunt is occurring, how accessible the area is to the public, past experiences or knowledge of the person/s involved, and whether granting permission aids WRD. All trapped hogs must be killed on site. Each non-WRD participant must fill out a volunteer service agreement and the primary WRD contact should record and submit volunteer time to the volunteer coordinator. Permission may be revoked at any time in writing.
 - c. The use of hog dogs by volunteers or non-WRD persons is permissible where this activity is either the most efficient means of control or when used in conjunction with other control efforts. Careful consideration and discretion should be used when selecting individuals for this activity. Region supervisors shall have the authority to grant/revoke permission for the use of hog dogs and must do so in writing to the individual(s). Considerations for granting

permission should include whether a hunt is occurring, how accessible the area is to the public, past experiences or knowledge of the person/s involved, and whether granting permission aids WRD. All captured hogs must be killed on site. Each non-WRD participant must fill out a volunteer service agreement and the primary WRD contact should record and submit volunteer time to the volunteer coordinator. Permission may be revoked at any time in writing.

D. Trapping and Control during Open Hunting Seasons

Generally, trapping and/or the use of bait should be avoided during open seasons on WRD lands, especially during managed deer hunts. However, some circumstances may require control efforts during open seasons. If bait will be used to trap or attract hogs, the area surrounding the trap must be clearly marked such that anyone approaching the trap would encounter signage indicating the presence of bait. This should include trails or roads leading to the trap, the trap itself, and any other areas from which the trap would likely be approached. Consistent sign messaging should be used on all WRD lands. Considerations should include how visible the area is to the public, whether the restricted area encompasses popular area for hunting game species, whether the baited area unduly blocks access to other areas for hunting, and whether a more efficient method exists. Because marking this area greatly decreases trapping efficiency in terms of manpower, most trapping should take place outside open seasons. When addressing specific damage issues during open hunting seasons, night shooting may be more appropriate than trapping. Efficiency and safety of night shooting can be greatly increased with the use of thermal imaging equipment.

E. Control on Lands not Owned by the State

Hogs may need to be controlled on WRD-managed lands not owned by the state. It is the responsibility of the WRD employee planning hog control activities to ensure that the activities are within the scope of the lease or land use agreement for the property in question. When renewing, or developing land use agreements (leases), WRD employees handling the agreement should make a concerted effort to include expressed authority for typical hog control activities. Where no clear authority exists for a needed control activity within an existing agreement, WRD employees should meet with the appropriate representative for the land and develop a workable solution consistent with this policy. The subsequent agreement may be a simple letter of authorization from the appropriate entity outlining the mutually agreed upon actions.

F. Carcass Disposal and Safety

Due to disease concerns, hog carcasses may not be donated to the public. When handling carcasses, gloves are required and eye protection recommended. Should any fluids from a hog carcass come into contact with eyes or any open wound, WRD staff should seek medical advice for prophylactic treatment of zoonotic diseases, particularly brucellosis. Carcasses shall not be congregated in any area unless disposed of in a burial pit designed and dug in consultation with the Georgia Department of Agriculture.