

# Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Feral Swine Committee

## 2024 Annual Report

*Compiled and Submitted by Alan Leary, MAFWA Ad-hoc Feral Swine Committee Chair 5/23/2023*

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) established the Midwest Ad-hoc Feral Swine Committee (MFSC) in 2013. The purpose of the feral swine committee is to further MAFWA's function of promoting the conservation and management of wildlife resources in the face of rapidly expanding feral swine populations which directly endanger those wildlife resources. The Committee is to collect and compare feral swine information among the member States and Provinces, and to provide management and policy recommendations to the Directors of MAFWA.

**MISSION:** Develop results-driven and science-based management actions to prevent the introduction and spread of feral swine and promote the eradication of existing populations of these animals in the Midwest.

**CHARGES:**

- 1) Develop management plans for feral swine based on sound scientific and proven methods.
- 2) Promote and encourage research on economically feasible and effective methods of feral swine control.
- 3) Encourage uniform policies on the translocation and interstate movement of feral swine.
- 4) Discuss the role of federal entities in the control of feral swine in the Midwest.
- 5) Encourage partnerships among states and between state and federal entities to unify the battle against the spread of feral swine.
- 6) Advise the MAFWA Directors on issues relating to feral swine policy, inform the Directors of committee actions and execute any directives given by them.

**Meeting Time and Place:** The MFSC did not meet this winter/spring because the International Wild Pig Conference was canceled with short notice. However, the Committee is planning to hold a joint virtual meeting with SEAFWA WHWG on June 3, 2024. Attendance was low, possibly due to this being the furthest west the conference has been held. In addition, some members could not get approval to travel.

**MAFWA FSC Members:** A list of members and representative states are included in Appendix 1.

**Executive Summary:** The MAFWA Feral Swine Committee annual report is summarily reduced to the respective State and Provincial reports submitted with the primary function of the MAFWA Feral Swine Committee being information and exchange network among states and provinces. The number of feral swine/wild pigs removed continues to increase in the more heavily wild pig populated states in the Midwest, with significant reductions in wild pig numbers and distributions in some Midwest states with lower pig numbers. Most of the work in the Midwest states is being conducted by USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services through cooperative agreements with states as part of the National Feral Swine Damage Management Program (NFSDMP).

**Director Action Items:** Charge 1; Begin development of a broad Midwest feral swine management (eradication/reduction) plan based on sound scientific and proven methods. Discussions were recently held at the AFWA Feral Swine Working Group meeting a year or two ago on the feasibility of creating a

national plan, rather than separate regional plans. This plan could be built from the results from WMI's study, case studies from individual states and USDA APHIS, information from One Health, and BMPs to start the process. This national plan would need to incorporate the differences in regions and states, state laws and policies, as well as the differences in severity of feral swine problems. There is a possibility of creating an Ad-hoc working group for this project. AFWA FSWG plans to have a deeper discussion about this at their fall meeting. This Committee has not received any further guidance on this topic.

Charges 2-6 are being accomplished through continued networking among the Committee representatives, attendance at the International Wild Pig Conference (IWPC) and representative participation in the NWPTF. Most states are participating in partnerships or agreements with USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services as part of the NFSDMP funded under the 2014 and 2018 Farm Bills.

**Director Information Items:** The value of the information exchanged at the IWPC and NWPTF meetings and throughout the year is invaluable to keeping abreast of the rapidly evolving "state of the art and science" of wild pig population control and hopefully, eventual elimination. The MFSC encourages providing support for representative attendance at both the IWPC and NWPTF meetings when possible, recognizing that participation of all MFSC representatives is beyond their primary or even secondary job responsibilities. The NWPTF website is now housed at The Berryman Institute at Utah State University and now handles organization and communications related to the NWPTF and IWPC's.

**MAFWA Research Priorities:** MAFWA Feral Swine Committee members were tasked with developing science-based management priorities by the Science and Research Committee of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). MAFWA FSC divided these priorities specifically by feral swine and other species of interest.

**AFWA Action:** AFWA decided to pursue Human Dimensions B-communication efforts to effectively communicate to sport hunting industry the negative effects of hunting feral swine. They created a first draft of a publication titled "Impacts of feral swine on popular game species in the United States." This document is still under review.

### **Management Priorities Specific to Feral Swine**

#### Wildlife Health

- a. Disease transmission between feral swine and both native wildlife and livestock
- b. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) -interspecies CWD infection: risks of feral swine contracting and spreading CWD
- c. African Swine Fever
- d. Pseudorabies
- e. Swine Brucellosis

#### Weather and Temperature-related Concerns

- a. Indirect and direct effects of climate change on feral swine populations

#### Invasive Species

- a. Feral Swine

### Emerging Technologies

- a. Approval and use of feral swine toxicants and feeders
- b. Improved trap technology
- c. Accurate techniques to determine feral swine densities
- d. Development of bait that attracts pigs without attracting non-target species, such as white-tailed deer and turkey, whose baiting seasons often curtail feral swine trapping efforts.

### Inter-jurisdictional Cooperation

- a. Collaborative nation-wide plan for feral swine eradication

### Human Dimensions

- a. Solutions to counter the release of unwanted pot-bellied pigs
- b. Effectively communicate to sport hunting industry the negative effects of hunting feral swine
- c. Solutions to eradicate feral swine in pig refuges where private landowners prohibit removal.

### **MAFWA FSC Chair rotation**

Alan Leary volunteered to chair the MAFWA Feral Swine Committee for the next two years. Our plans are to rotate chairs in alphabetic order by state every 2 years, similar to SEAFWA WHWG.

### **2024 State/Province Status Reports Submitted**

#### **Iowa Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Jim Coffey**

The responsibility of State Feral (Wild) Hog Coordinator falls under the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) forest wildlife program. Jim Coffey is the contact person for the agency. This position is located out of the Chariton Research Station in Chariton Iowa 24570 US Hwy 34 Chariton Iowa (641-774-2958). The Iowa DNR remains the coordinating agency for feral hog incidents working with several other State and Federal agencies. USDA wildlife services will continue to take a lead role on eradication and disease testing of located animals. The Iowa DNR depredation team and local conservation officers along with the Iowa Department of agriculture are used as needed.

The 2023 calendar year saw only one reported incident in the state. A total of 4 hogs were observed in one location. Southwest Iowa (Mills) county had one reported cluster of hogs seen crossing a road. They were determined to be local escaped domestic hogs. This report came from a local veterinarian. One hog was dispatched. No one area of the State shows a prevalence for sightings, although we remained concerned of any reports from the southwest portion of the State since this is the area closest to other states that have wild hog activity. There continues to be an increasing number of heritage breed hogs that are being raised in open pastures and pot-bellied (pet) animals in the State. The Iowa DNR did not kill any hogs during this year. Disease testing is coordinated through the USDA APHIS office and no disease was reported this year. We do plan on continuing with feral hog information in our DNR hunting regulations booklet for 2024-2025. Feral hogs continue to be a concern for wildlife management staff. The Iowa feral hog working group did not meet in 2023. Iowa Department of Agriculture has a new state veterinarian that is concerned about feral hogs and reached out for more communication between agencies as animals are detected.

## Illinois Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Chris Jacques

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has teamed up with USDA – Wildlife Services (WS) to identify areas with feral swine (FS), develop and implement an assistance program for landowners experiencing FS conflicts, coordinate and expand disease surveillance, conduct outreach to stakeholders and the public, and provide direct control management assistance. Technical assistance and/or direct control assistance has been provided to numerous State, Federal (USFS), and Private landowners throughout Illinois since 2011. A total of 552 FS and five self-sustaining breeding populations of FS in Illinois have been successfully eliminated. IDNR and WS continue to monitor reports of FS received from deer and turkey hunters as well as residents throughout the state. Follow-up investigations are conducted to confirm the presence of these invasive species. A total of 23 FS reports were investigated in 2023, but no new populations were discovered.

In 2023, the USDA-WS National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) analyzed FS tissue samples to help identify the origin of FS sampled in Pope County, IL. NWRC utilized a “machine learning method” to leverage genetic information from FS across their invaded range in the contiguous United States to make a model to predict the origin of an individual FS given their genetics. Based on this new approach, strong genetic relatedness among FS from eastern TX, northern AR and Pope County, IL were determined

(Fig. 1). It should be noted that many samples from AR likely originated from TX. Thus, either the same source of FS in TX was used to populate areas in both Pope County and northern AR or FS were translocated from TX to AR and then from AR to Pope County. In 2014, IL DNR established an administrative rule (17-700) which prohibits the possession, propagation, transport, and release of feral swine in the state. It is also illegal to hunt or shoot feral swine outside of established firearm deer seasons without a valid unfilled deer permit.



A self-sustaining breeding population of FS was identified in Pope County among private

properties and Shawnee National Forest (NF) lands spanning approximately 50 sq mi in **2019**. Extensive WS management efforts (trapping, ground sharpshooting and aerial control) resulted in the successful removal of 66 FS from this region. All FS tested negative for Classical Swine Fever and Pseudorabies, while 1 subadult female tested non-negative for Swine Brucellosis. WS surveillance continued upon private properties and Shawnee NF lands throughout 2023. A total of 32 searches for FS sign/damage that spanned 79 miles was conducted in Pope County during calendar year 2023. Wildlife Services also continues to utilize numerous trail cameras among areas where FS activity was once prevalent. Only one adult boar has been confirmed to still exist among this large area, which was observed via WS trail camera on Shawnee NF lands in late December 2023.

## **Indiana Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Zachary Voyles**

Indiana has no new developments since last year's report. We are still feral swine free! We are currently in a "monitoring phase" and investigating reports that come to IN DNR or our partners over at APHIS-WS. The only pigs we are getting reports on are either escaped domestics or "free range" pets.

## **Kentucky Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Terri Brunjes**

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) Commission voted in favor of prohibiting wild pig hunting in December 2023. The Kentucky Wild Pig Eradication Task Force supported this ban. A prohibition on wild pig hunting was necessary to remove incentives for illegal releases and allow for the best chance for complete eradication of wild pigs. Regulatory amendments are currently going through the legislative process to become law. The amendments are expected to go into effect in September 2024. This ban will provide the best chance at full eradication and will not prevent a landowner's statutory right to protect their property from damage by wild pigs. Kentucky has only a few scattered wild pig populations and does not experience a heavy wild pig hunting culture. These conditions are favorable for complete wild pig eradication. However, illegal release of wild pigs is continuing to occur, threatening the progress that state and federal partners have made. Currently, there is sufficient professional staff to handle eradication efforts. If populations increase, there may not be adequate staff to carry out our eradication mission.

USDA APHIS Wildlife Services had a very successful aerial operation this winter. 245 wild pigs were removed at Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area in February 2024. Land Between the Lakes encompasses land in both Kentucky and Tennessee. Most pigs removed were located in Tennessee. The specific numbers removed per state were not provided. USDA APHIS Wildlife Services also removed 74 wild pigs in a population located in the adjoining vicinity of Magoffin, Johnson, and Floyd Counties in March. Only 9 wild pigs were found and removed during aerial operations in 2023. The increased success was partly due to snowy conditions and partially because staff spent considerable time locating pigs prior to aerial operations.

Wild pigs were reported in an isolated area of Pike County in 2023, which was indicative of illegal release. This report is 9 miles from the KY/VA border and 36 miles from the closest wild pig population within KY. Lack of access to private property has prevented removal efforts. It is believed that hunting guides are providing commercial guide services for wild pig hunts in the area. USDA APHIS conducted aerial surveys but were not able to locate wild pigs or damage. This is an area of concern that requires further efforts.

Out of 120 counties in Kentucky, 20 counties (16%) are listed with a wild pig presence. Kentucky's 2024 Wild Pig Eradication Priority Map shows 3 areas with known breeding populations encompassing 6 counties. Additionally, 14 counties are listed as areas of concern due to either proximities to wild pig populations in adjoining states, isolated sightings, or recently eradicated populations in which monitoring is continuing to occur. The wild pig core area for Land Between the Lakes is located in Lyon and Trigg Counties. A second core area is located in Magoffin, Johnson, and Floyd Counties. Another core area located on Fort Campbell Military Base in Christian County is believed to be eradicated at this time. Monitoring efforts will continue.



## **Michigan Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Dwayne Etter**

We continued to receive scattered reports of wild pigs throughout Michigan in 2023. The United States Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) responded to reports, and although they did not remove any pigs they confirmed two taken by others. MDNR continues to maintain a voluntary online reporting system and asks all hunters registering a harvested deer about sightings of feral pig. Reports are forwarded to USDA for follow up.

In 2023, MDNR filed legal action against several facilities in violation of the invasive species order Amendment No. 1 of 2010, making it illegal to possess Russian boar or Russian boar hybrids.

### **Research:**

There were no active research projects conducted by MDNR or Michigan USDA-WS in 2023. However, Michigan USDA-WS continues to provide samples to the National Wildlife Research Center's genetics laboratory for ongoing research.

## **Minnesota Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Eric Nelson**

In 2023, Minnesota is still free of a feral swine population. We do have instances of escaped domestic swine "at large" that end up living in the wild. A total of 19 feral swine complaints in 13 different counties were investigated in 2023. Four complaints were responded to with a site visit or multiple site visits. We continue to work with Minnesota Board of Animal Health on locating the owners and USDA-Wildlife Services (USDA-WS) on monitoring and removal if necessary. USDA-WS performed monitoring at one location, but the swine was shot by an adjacent landowner.

Minnesota's main issue is still loose domestic swine not claimed by their owner. We continue to have reports of swine killed by vehicles. USDA-WS has reclassified Minnesota from an "early detection" status to an "elimination" status as of October 2023. This removed USDA-WS in Minnesota from getting \$42,000 of yearly federal funds for USDA-WS to perform monitoring and removal.

In the fall of 2023 USDA-WS added an option to their program for states recently going to elimination status or in elimination status to get federal support for feral swine monitoring and removal. Minnesota was one of the states requesting this type of program from USDA-WS to stay feral swine free. The state director for USDA-WS can apply yearly for additional funds to help with monitoring and removal of feral swine. The USDA-WS state director for Minnesota did apply and will receive up to \$35,000 to perform monitoring and removal of feral swine.

In 2023 Minnesota's legislature requested the Department of Natural Resources to file a report on feral swine management in the state. There was some concern due to the "Canadian super pig" and potential movement from Canada into Minnesota. The Department of Natural Resources created an inter and intra agency working group and requested public comment to prepare the report to be filed by February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. A draft report was started in December. Due to the Canadian super pig concern more communication with Canadian provinces was done in 2023. As a result, in December a meeting was scheduled to be held January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, through the Canadian Consulate office to discuss feral swine management with Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and national swine association members.

Minnesota is still reliant on USDA-WS to conduct all swine monitoring and removal activities. Our Division of Fish and Wildlife is funded by game and fish license fees. Feral swine are not a huntable game species in Minnesota. To date we do not have a funding mechanism to remove swine at large living in the wild as feral swine.

### **Missouri Feral Swine Report- Submitted by Alan Leary**

The Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) Commission again fully funded the \$1.85 million Statewide Strategic Plan for Feral Hog Elimination in Missouri. The funding continues to go to a cooperative agreement with the US Department of Agriculture – Wildlife Services (WS) to employ full time feral hog technicians and purchase equipment for them as called for in the Plan. Other members of the Missouri Feral Hog Elimination Partnership (Partnership) have also made significant contributions to support elimination efforts in Missouri.

In 2023 the Partnership removed 7,885 feral hogs from the landscape. That is about 1,600 more than we removed in 2022. In 2022 we removed about 3,600 less than we removed in 2021. The total number of hogs removed in MO decreased in 2021 and 2022 but then went up slightly in 2023. The small increase in 2023 is probably related to a really good acorn crop in 2022 made hogs difficult to catch that year because of all the natural food available.

One metric we use to monitor our progress is the number of watersheds occupied by feral hogs. In 2016 feral hogs occupied 459 watersheds in Missouri which covered 11,239,778 acres. At the end of 2023 feral hogs occupied 185 watersheds in Missouri which covered 4,445,939 acres. That is a reduction of about 6.8 million acres or 60% in seven years.

We are also using unmanned aircraft system (UAS) or drones extensively. We use drones with Forward Looking Infrared cameras to assist with night shooting. Rather than having staff wait near a bait pile to remove hard to trap hogs at night, we locate the hogs with the drone to make night shooting much more efficient. In addition, we are using drones to scout for hogs ahead of the helicopter when doing aerial operations. This helps to maximize helicopter time because the helicopter spends less time searching for hogs.

The Partnership is working with staff at the National Wildlife Research Center to conduct genetic analysis on blood samples taken from feral hogs that are captured in MO. This work is revealing some very interesting information related to the movement of hogs in MO.

Using funding from Farm Bill grants we have hired four extension educators through the University of Missouri Extension Service. These educators talk with landowners and educate them about our efforts. They also meet with and talk to Farm Bureau chapters, County Commissions, Soil and Water Districts, anybody they can to educate them about our efforts and increase support. They have been very effective.

We have also used Farm Bill grants to purchase equipment such as no till drills and cultipackers. This equipment is placed at local Soil and Water District offices and is available at no charge to landowners who have had their land damaged by feral hogs.



### **Nebraska Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Sam Wilson**

In 2003 the Nebraska State Legislature enacted statutes that prohibit pig hunting. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission regulations also prohibit the possession or release of wild pigs. These laws and regulations remove any incentive for people to own, move, or release feral pigs in the state. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is tasked with eliminating feral pigs upon their discovery. Eradication efforts have primarily taken place since 2004. Shooting from a helicopter – in cooperation with Wildlife Services – has proven to be the most successful method of eradication; although other methods such as trapping and shooting over bait are used. We believe the legal framework that removes incentives for people to own or release wild pigs has been the most important factor in allowing for the complete eradication of feral pigs in Nebraska. No feral pigs were removed during 2023 and there is no present research taking place. We do have minor issues with escaped pet (pot-bellied) and domestic pigs but we are not aware of any populations of wild-living feral pigs in Nebraska.

### **Ohio Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Clint McCoy**

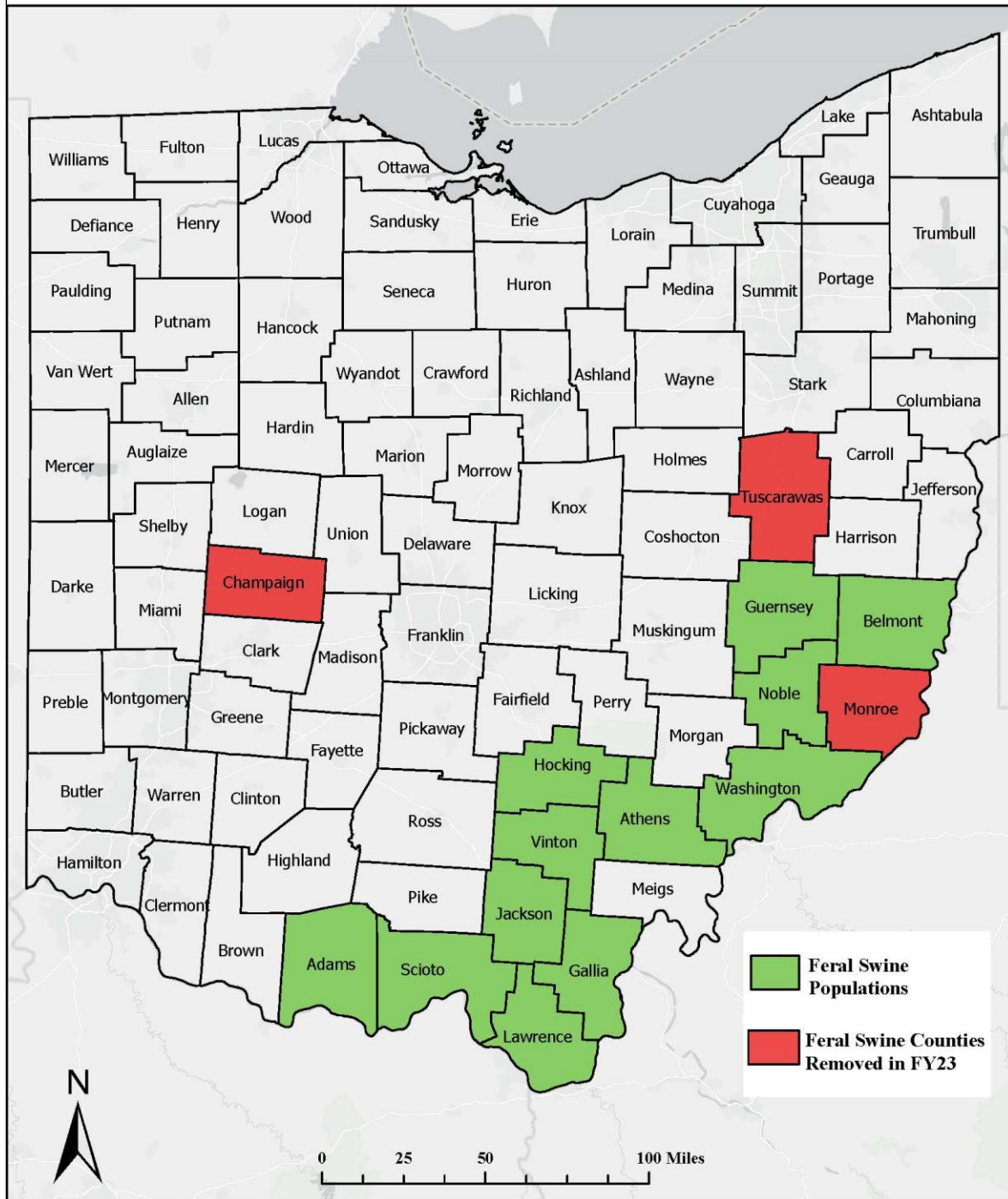
USDA Wildlife Services (WS) in Ohio conducted feral swine surveillance and removal efforts on over a million acres of federal, state, and private lands during FY23. In total, 58 feral swine were removed from two counties, Adams and Vinton. One feral swine was removed via firearm sharpshooting, 25 feral swine were trapped, and 32 feral swine were removed during aerial operations with the helicopter. In FY23, Ohio WS verified a total of \$8,593 of damage caused by feral swine rooting. Verified damage occurred on pastureland, standing trees, and general wildlife habitat.

Sixty-nine biological samples were collected from 27 feral swine to support disease surveillance for classical swine fever, swine brucellosis, pseudorabies, and the national feral swine genetic archive. Four adult boars and 2 adult sows tested positive for the pseudorabies virus in FY23. Five of those individuals required additional genetic analysis which resulted in those feral swine being directly associated with a population in southeastern Oklahoma. Results were discussed during the annual meeting with Ohio's Feral Swine Task Force.

In FY23, the Ohio Feral Swine Task Force declared Monroe, Champaign, and Tuscarawas Counties free of feral swine, thus removing them from the Ohio feral swine population map (Figure 1). Outreach was an important step in removing counties from the state's population map. In total, Ohio WS interacted with 2,911 individuals and distributed 1,378 leaflets regarding feral swine.

In FY24, Ohio WS plans to focus on removing more population polygons in Noble and Guernsey Counties, reduce feral swine populations in Vinton and Adams Counties, and refocus attention on parts of Wayne National Forest in Jackson and Gallia Counties.

# Ohio's Feral Swine Populations FY23



## Ontario Feral Swine Report – Submitted by Paula Julio

There is currently no evidence to suggest that there are established populations of wild pigs that are breeding and self-sustaining in Ontario, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) continues to work to keep it this way. [Ontario's Strategy to Address the Threat of Invasive Wild Pigs \(2021\)](#) outlines the province's proactive approach to address the wild pig problem. In Ontario, pigs (*Sus scrofa*) are regulated as an invasive species under the [Invasive Species Act, 2015](#) and certain prohibitions apply, including:

- It is prohibited to release any pig into the natural environment. Certain requirements must be met if a pig escapes, including immediately notifying the MNRF and capturing or killing the pig as soon as practicable.
- It is prohibited to bring a live pig into a provincial park or conservation reserve.
- Hunting pigs is prohibited with exceptions for activities to protect property from damage caused by wild pigs, including for the purpose of maintaining biosecurity. A person who captures or kills a pig for protection of property must immediately notify the ministry and provide relevant information (i.e., the location and number of pigs captured or killed).
- It is prohibited to import, possess, transport, propagate, lease, trade, buy, and sell live Eurasian wild boar and their hybrids in Ontario.

The ministry continues to receive and investigate all sightings of pigs that are outside a fence and not otherwise contained or under the physical control of a person. Sightings reported by the public are predominantly domesticated pigs often determined to be escapees from containment with the majority returning to their enclosures or recaptured by their owners. From April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, reports of domesticated pigs accounted for 30% of sightings, with pot-bellied pigs specifically accounting for 28% on the landscape. There was one confirmed sighting of Eurasian wild boar during this time period, resulting in the removal of two pigs from the wild in eastern Ontario. More information on wild pig sightings collected in Ontario is available at [www.Ontario.ca/wildpigs](http://www.Ontario.ca/wildpigs).

Ministry staff investigate areas where reports have suggested a high likelihood that wild pigs are present. At these locations, ministry staff:

- engage with residents to learn as much as possible about wild pig activity;
- set up trail cameras to detect whether wild pigs are still in the area; and,
- where appropriate, ministry staff trap and remove invasive wild pigs from the natural environment.

**Time and Place of Next Meeting:** A joint meeting with SEAFWA Wild Hog Working Group will be held virtually on June 3, 2024.

## Appendix 1: Midwest Members and States

<b>STATE</b>	<b>MEMBER</b>
Iowa	Jim Coffey
Illinois	Chris Jacques
Indiana	Zachary Voyles
Kansas	Shane Hesting
Kentucky	Terri Brunjes (Chair)
Michigan	Dwayne Etter, Melissa Nichols
Minnesota	Eric Nelson
Missouri	Alan Leary Chair
North Dakota	Vacant
Nebraska	Sam Wilson
Ohio	Clint McCoy
South Dakota	Vacant
Wisconsin	Brad Koele
Ontario	Bree Walpole
Manitoba	Janine Stewart
Saskatchewan	Leanne Heisler
APHIS WS	Dana Cole