



Texas Wild Pig Take Survey

Need:

There have been no data available to truly characterize landowner-initiated removal of wild pigs in Texas. These data would be useful to frame harvest methods employed in order to estimate the number of wild pigs removed from the statewide population of approximately 2.6 million animals. This information could then be used to refine the mortality estimate in a population model. Lastly, this should also help guide AgriLife Extension's educational efforts to abate wild pig damage through landowner-initiated control.

Methodology:

In 2011, county Extension agents were asked to survey landowners regarding 1) whether or not they removed wild pigs from their properties during calendar year 2010, 2) if pigs were removed, how many and by what method(s) and 3) property acreage and location (county) controlled by the survey respondents. Surveys were collected from March 1 through May 31, 2011. CEAs used direct mailouts and in-person distribution at various Extension educational events to survey landowners. All surveys were returned to Billy Higginbotham-Extension Wildlife and Fisheries Specialist for analyses.

Results:

A total of 697 landowner surveys were returned. The surveys represented data from 139 counties from properties totaling approximately 1.8 million acres. During 2010, 80% of survey respondents removed wild pigs from their properties. A total of 36,646 wild pigs were harvested during the year by survey respondents.

All trapping represented 57% of the wild pig take with "trap and sell" representing 27% of the total number removed followed by "trap and destroy" (21%) and "trap and use" (9%). The increase in the number of buying stations plus a greater awareness by landowners of the opportunity to sell live pigs has probably increased the supply in recent years.

All shooting represented 35% of all pigs removed with "landowner/employee shooting" representing 16%. "Recreational hunting" accounted for 11% of the total take while "aerial shooting" (not by Wildlife Services) represented 8% of the pigs removed in 2010. Removal by "dogs" (6%) and "snares" (2%) constituted the remainder of the pig removal reported.

Although we are continually asked by many hunters as to where they can hunt in order to “help” landowners control pigs—you are simply not going to impact a wild pig population through recreational hunting alone—not when the models suggest that an annual harvest of from 50% to 70% (our model suggested 66%) of the population is necessary just to hold it stable. Nevertheless, an increasing number of landowners are relying on the revenue stream generated by marketing hunting opportunities for wild pigs to offset damage and generate income, especially during the off seasons.

These harvest data were employed to refine our mortality estimate for use in our population model. Trapped and sold harvest estimates from the surveys were also compared to the number of pigs slaughtered at processors where USDA inspectors were on hand (approximately 640,000 wild pigs inspected and processed from 2004-2009 alone). This allowed us to calculate an estimated annual harvest of 753,646 wild pigs. It is important to remember that this is only an estimate—but it suggests that in 2010 we removed approximately 29% of the estimated 2.6 million pigs in Texas.

Based on our annual estimated population increase of 21% from the model, it would take about 5 years for a Texas wild pig population to double in size. However, it is important to remember that several factors (including drought) can have an impact on population growth rates.

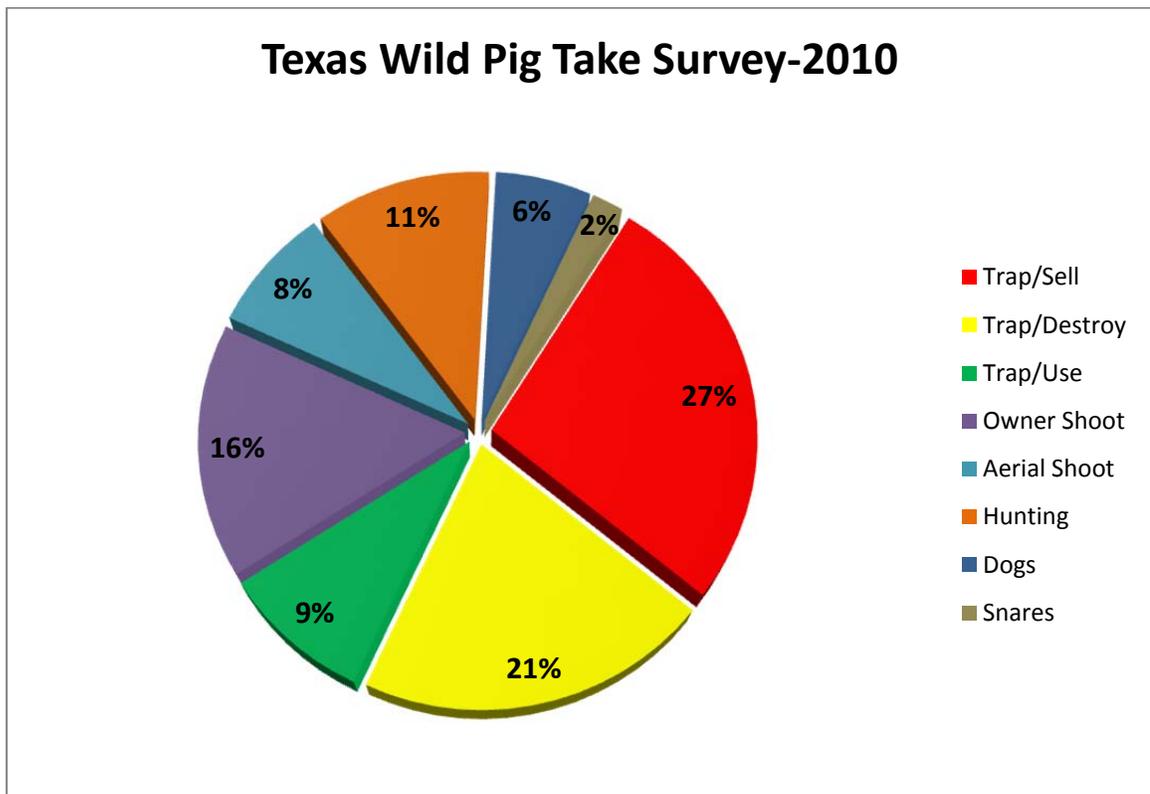


Figure 1. Methods of take for a total of 36,646 wild pigs based on surveys from 697 Texas landowners in CY 2010.

Some Additional Recent Research Findings on Wild Pigs

*Catch rates are 4x higher in corral traps than box traps. Mature boars in particular have an aversion to box traps. **Georgia**

*Following pig euthanasia inside of traps, 10 of 12 (83%) traps caught additional pigs within one week (Suggests that it does not reduce future catch when pigs are killed in traps). **Alabama**

*Boars spent 32 minutes on average at trap locations while sounders spent an average of 70 minutes. Sounders also made twice as many trips to trap locations as compared to boars. **Alabama**

*73% of pigs trapped and released were recaptured later (We have confirmed this trend with our telemetry work at the Overton Center). **Alabama**

*Continuous catch doors (saloon, rooster and swinging door) don't catch additional pigs once they trip and close. We have also confirmed this at Overton. This means that the drop or guillotine gate (once closed cannot be opened) can be used with equal success compared to continuous catch doors.

Alabama

*Baiting with soured corn and shelled corn caught pigs at the same rate. (However, experience tells us that there will be more non-target species (e.g., raccoons, deer) use on shelled corn compared to soured corn). **Alabama**

*Drop Nets vs. Corral Traps. Drop nets captured 86% of marked pigs while corral traps captured only 46%. The catch rate (in hours spent per pig captured) was also better (1.9) for drop nets than corral traps (2.6). These researchers (Noble Foundation) are currently evaluating a hybrid between the drop net and corral trap called the "Boar Buster". **Oklahoma**

*Pig response to aerial gunning. Wild pigs displayed one of two behavior patterns in response to harassment by helicopters: 1) Leave home range by no more than a mile and then return within 24 to 48 hours or 2) simply hunker down in security cover and stay put. Regardless, they stayed close to home.

Texas

*Sodium nitrite as a pig toxicant. Research trials continue and at this point it appears a delivery system that only pigs can access appears to be more likely than finding a pig-specific bait. Sodium nitrite is already approved as a preservative for certain meats destined for human consumption. It is also humane (works within about 90 minutes) and has no secondary impact on other animals scavenging a carcass (e.g., vultures, coyotes). At this time, landowners cannot use this or any other compound for the expressed intent to poison wild pigs in the United States. The research trials are part of the EPA registration process and will likely continue for a few more years. **Texas**

*Lastly, we (AgriLife Extension) are currently conducting demonstration trials investigating the impact of gate width on trapping success. Camera data indicate that many pigs have an aversion to entering narrow gate openings, especially mature pigs--boars and sows. **Texas**

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