

Monitoring for Feral Swine in New York

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Starting in 2008, The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Wildlife Services has been working on feral swine (*Sus scrofa*) elimination and monitoring in New York State. In 2017, the last remaining feral swine was removed from St. Lawrence County. USDA currently classifies New York as a feral swine "elimination state", but that title does not mean WS' monitoring efforts cease. Continued monitoring after elimination is the focus of WS' current feral swine management efforts and the public's help is vital in the continuing need.

Feral swine in New York have accounted for over \$1 million in damage and control costs. Eurasian boars were documented in 16 counties, with established breeding populations in six counties. Because of their extraordinarily high reproductive rates, lack of natural predators, and intelligence, feral swine are extremely difficult to control once a population becomes established. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and USDA Wildlife Services took an aggressive and timely approach to managing feral swine and were successful in their elimination. In total, WS and DEC removed 209 feral swine from 2008-2014.

Feral swine, a very destructive invasive species, pose threats to many aspects of their environment. They root and wallow in crop fields and native vegetation. Their destruction eventually leads to a reduction in water and natural resource quality. Numerous New York agricultural and natural resource risks are associated with feral swine. Two main agriculture industries are pork and dairy. Feral swine are disease vectors and can transmit 37 different diseases to livestock, pets, wildlife, and humans. The dairy industry is at potential risk due to feed crop damage and disease transmission. All wetlands, which are federally protected, as well as private lands, are also at risk. Estimates suggest one feral swine can damage 10 acres of wetlands per year resulting in estimated \$64,000 per acre in restoration costs.

New York Wildlife Services created a Five-Prong Approach to feral swine management in 2008. This plan consists of: 1. On-the-ground management, 2. An early detection network, 3. Collaboration with law enforcement, 4. Aerial surveillance, and 5. Detection dog surveillance. The strategy succeeded in eliminating swine and will continue to be a successful tool in monitoring efforts.

New York now faces a monitoring challenge. The state does not want to be considered an "eliminated" state only to discover years later that wild pigs went undetected due non-existent monitoring, especially when monitoring techniques are available. We must maintain a strong early detection network and continue to educate the public about the threats posed by invasive feral swine.

Regulations are a critical component to New York's feral swine management strategy. As of October 2013 it is illegal to import, breed or release Eurasian boars in New York. It

is illegal to possess, sell, distribute, trade or transport Eurasian boars in the state. In addition, a regulation adopted on April 23, 2014 prohibits the hunting or trapping of free-ranging Eurasian boar statewide, with some exceptions provided for landowners and agency personnel.

Wildlife Services in NY also investigates every report made about potential feral swine sightings and uses these reports as part of our early detection network. If you would like to make a report or would like to learn more about feral swine in New York, please use the contact information below.

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