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MDC Eliminates More than 7,300 Feral Hogs from Missouri

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MDC and partners eliminate more than 7,300 feral hogs from Missouri's landscape in 2018 so far

Experts maintain trapping whole sounders is the most effective method in feral hog removal.

Jefferson City, Missouri - The Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) feral hog strike team has tallied up elimination numbers from January through September 2018. So far, they've yielded a total of 7,339 feral hogs removed by MDC, partner agencies, and private landowners. In 2017, 6,561 feral hogs were removed from the landscape.

Crews in southeast Missouri removed 3,849 feral hogs, which is where the highest density of feral hogs occurs. The Ozark region removed 2,358 and the Southwest region removed 823 feral hogs. St. Louis region removed 186 feral hogs, Kansas City Region removed 116 feral hogs, and Northeast Region removed one. The highest densities of feral hogs occur south of Interstate 44, with very few feral hog sightings in the north portion of the state.

"We've been very strategic in our efforts, focusing on removal of whole groups of feral hogs at a time, before moving onto another area," said Mark McLain, MDC's feral hog elimination team leader. "This strategic approach is important because if we leave even a few feral hogs behind in an area, they can reproduce quickly and put us back where we

started.”

McLain said it’s essential that the public understand why feral hogs must be eliminated.

“Feral hogs are a destructive, invasive species that don’t belong here; they’re not a native species,” McLain said. “They out-compete native wildlife for habitat and food. For example, places with a lot of feral hogs will see their wild turkey and deer populations diminish.”

McLain said feral hogs are known to carry diseases that could possibly spread to humans, pets, and livestock. He hopes the message that hunting is not an effective method for eliminating feral hog populations is starting to catch on.

“For over 20 years, unregulated hunting of feral hogs was allowed in Missouri, during which time our feral hog population expanded from a few counties to over 30 counties,” he said.

In 2017, MDC, the Corps of Engineers, and the LAD Foundation established regulations against feral hog hunting on lands owned and managed by these three organizations. Other agencies have passed regulations similar to MDC’s to eliminate hog hunting on land they own.

“A persistent piece of this story is continued illegal releases of feral hogs, which establishes populations and further spreads the problem,” McLain said. “This is illegal and when caught, those who release feral hogs face hefty fines.”

McLain said MDC is partnered with many agricultural and environmental groups as well as hundreds of private landowners, that are all committed to eliminating feral hogs from Missouri. Landowners and the public are a crucial element of this effort, especially since most land in Missouri is privately owned.

“Landowners who’ve experienced feral hogs on their land have learned that hunting feral hogs pushes them onto neighboring property, which causes problems for their neighbors,” McLain said.

When neighboring landowners try to control feral hogs through hunting, the hogs simply travel back and forth between the properties, escaping and causing more damage. Trapping with no hunting interference is the best method to eliminate them. Landowners can seek help from MDC and USDA such as technical advice, on-site visits, loaning

equipment and training.

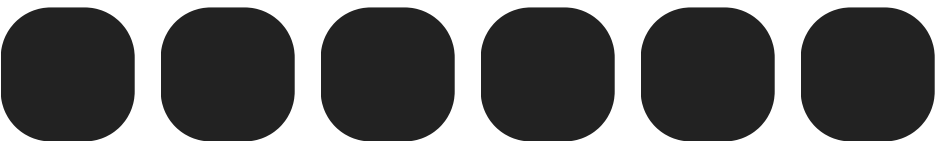
Feral hogs are not wildlife and are a serious threat to fish, forests and wildlife as well as agricultural resources. Feral hogs damage property, agriculture, and natural resources by their aggressive rooting of soil in addition to their trampling and consumption of crops as part of their daily search for food.

Feral hogs have expanded their range in the U.S. from 17 to 38 states over the past 30 years. Their populations grow rapidly because feral hogs can breed any time of year and produce two litters of one to seven piglets every 12 to 15 months. Feral hogs are also known to carry diseases such as swine brucellosis, pseudorabies, trichinosis and leptospirosis, which are a threat to Missouri agriculture and human health.

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