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European Wild Hog/Feral Hog/European-Feral Crossbreed

Feral hogs are an invasive species which cause damage to the ecosystem of Colorado.



Species Type
Mammal

English

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About This Species

Feral hogs look similar to domestic hogs and vary in color and coat pattern. Feral hogs are more muscular than their domestic cousins, with very little fat. European wild hogs are roughly the same size as their relatives, but their longer legs and snouts distinguish them from other hogs. They also have a larger head in proportion to the body. The European wild hog has long, stiff, grizzled colored hairs, often with split ends. It also has long side whiskers, a longer, straighter tail, and a nape on the neck, giving it a razorback, sloped appearance. European wild hogs can hybridize with other species, generally resulting in young with telltale European hog characteristics. Due to hybridization, very few true European wild hogs still exist in the Midwest.

In Colorado it is illegal to intentionally release hogs to the wild.

More Information:

Physical Characteristics

Mature hogs may reach a shoulder height of 36 inches and weigh 100 to over 400 pounds. The larger hogs are typically not far removed from their domestic cousins. Males are generally larger than females. The young are born bearing a reddish coat with longitudinal stripes. As it matures, its coat becomes primarily dark brown or black. Feral hogs have 4 continuously growing tusks, 2 on top, 2 below. Contact between these tusks causes continual sharpening of the lower tusks. Feral hogs could also be identified by their tracks, which are similar to a deer track except the toes are more rounded and wider in comparison to length. The scat is very similar to that of a small calf, being dropped in several small piles.

Commonly Found

Feral hogs are nocturnal, so the visible signs they leave behind are often the only indicator of their presence. These signs include: wallowing, rooting, rubs, crossings, trails and scat (droppings). Wallows are made where hogs root and roll in the mud to cool off and protect their skin from the sun and insects. Rubs are made when hogs scratch or rub themselves on tree trunks, telephone poles, fence posts, and rocks leaving a noticeable sign with clinging mud and hair. The height of the rub may be a good indicator the size of the hog. Rooting is easily recognized because it looks as if the soil has been plowed. This often occurs over a large area, some holes measuring as much as three feet deep.

Range

Feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) are an old world species belonging to the family Suidae, and include European wild hogs, feral hogs, and European-feral crossbreeds. Feral hogs are found in many habitats, from the moist pine forests in East Texas to the brush country of South Texas. In Colorado, feral hogs have been observed in the southeastern extent along the Cimarron River (including Oklahoma and Kansas) in very small numbers. They have also recently been observed west of Dove Creek, CO across the border in Utah. The limited populations in Colorado are usually monitored by air.

Habitat

Feral hogs prefer rivers, creeks, and drainages when available. Hogs generally prefer dense vegetation cover often associated with water, but they also do well in drought prone environments. In hot weather, they enjoy wallowing in wet, muddy areas and are never far from dense protective cover. They will concentrate in areas rich with food resources, especially with nut producing trees or agricultural crops. The feral hog's home range is based mainly on food availability and cover. It is usually less than 5,000 acres, but can range up to 70,000 acres.

Diet

Hogs are opportunistic omnivores and will eat pretty much anything they come across - which is part of why they are so destructive. They prefer roots, tubers, bulbs, acorns, and other nuts.

Reproduction

Breeding may occur at 6 months of age, but 8-10 months is typical. In poor habitat conditions, sows have been known to eat their young. Gestation lasts around 115 days, yielding an average litter size of four to six, but with good conditions may result in 10-12 young. Most sows have only 1 litter annually, but they are capable of producing two litters in a year. In the spring the young are born with a 1:1 male to female sex ratio. Feral hogs travel in family groups known as sounders, comprised normally of two sows and their young. Mature boars are usually solitary but may join a herd to breed. The wild hog generally lives about four to five years under good conditions, although it has been known to live up to eight years.

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