

Section 6
Other Considerations

This section will discuss other considerations to keep in mind during wild pig control efforts including carcass disposal, contraception, and future potential of using poison.

Carcass Disposal

The meat from wild pigs is edible and can be taken home by the landowner. Depending on location, there may be local meat processors that can accept wild pigs. Generally, deer processors cannot accept wild pigs; instead, hunters and other interested persons must contact the Georgia Department of Agriculture (www.agr.georgia.gov). Wild pigs can be processed at “any facility licensed by the Georgia Department of Agriculture Meat Inspection Section” authorized to handle “custom exempt products.” A list of custom exempt facilities is available by calling the Georgia Department of Agriculture at 404-656-3673. See the website and Frequently Asked Questions at <http://agr.georgia.gov/hunters-helping-farmers-faq.aspx> for more information.

Georgia Department of Agriculture’s Dead Animal Disposal Rule, 40-13-5, describes the proper way to bury an animal. Wild pigs are not domestic animals and are therefore exempt from the rule (<http://agr.georgia.gov/hunters-helping-farmers-faq.aspx>). Wild pigs and associated pig products cannot be donated or given away if considered to be “hunter-killed.” Hunter-killed wild pigs are to be used exclusively by the owner, or the hunter of the animal, his/her household, and his/her non-paying guests and employees.

Carcasses may also be burned or buried. If burning carcasses, dig a pit and throw the bodies into it before burning. This will help lessen the chance of spreading a fire and will offer an easy way of burial should any remains be left following the fire. An accelerant such as diesel fuel or kerosene is often poured over the carcasses to start the fire.

If burying carcasses, State law requires a minimum grave depth such that the carcass is covered by at least 3 feet of soil. Because of potential groundwater contamination, burial is not recommended in southern Georgia or areas where there is a high ground water table (M. Wilson, pers. comm.). Regulations pertaining to carcass disposal are found in the Georgia legal code (O.C.G.A – Title 4, Chapter 5, Sections 1-11).

Burning or burying carcasses will help to decrease the attraction of scavenging animals such as vultures or coyotes. Utilization of heavy digging machinery will be required to dig a pit that will be deep, long, and wide enough to contain the carcasses of dispatched feral hogs. The depth, length, and width of the pit needed will depend on the number of hogs captured and killed.

Some hunters, specifically shooters, will simply leave pigs where they lie. This action often attracts scavengers, as well as pets and wild dogs, to the area.

Wild pigs are not considered wildlife in Georgia. Hunters may let individual wild pigs lay where they fall. This is not a violation of willful and wanton waste laws as these rules apply to wildlife (T. Holbrook, GWF, pers. comm.). Wild pigs die in the woods naturally, and there is no obligation to locate them or bury them. However, when conducting large scale hunting or trapping operations, adequate means of carcass disposal in compliance with all applicable laws must be employed. Contact the Georgia Department of Agriculture or the Georgia Wildlife Resources Division for guidance on legal means of carcass disposal.

Contraception

Development of an effective contraceptive, or birth control, for any animal faces several challenges. The contraceptive must be reversible in case an animal begins to exhibit any unforeseen adverse reactions. Contraceptives must be administrable in the field and must be species-specific to ensure non-target species are not affected. Applied contraceptives should not affect animal behavior, including not only social behavior, but breeding behavior as well. At the time of this manual's printing, no anti-fertility control drugs have been approved for the control of wild pigs. However, the development of endocrine regulatory drugs that could suppress certain hormones and prevent fertility is possible in the future.

The application of bait laced with a contraceptive agent has been considered as an option, but determining a type of bait that will be avoided by non-target species is necessary.

Current research has found injections of gonadotropin-releasing hormone to be effective in captive pigs. However, application of this contraceptive in the field is difficult, making this means of control ineffective. GonaCon™, a contraceptive under research, was originally developed for controlling whitetail deer populations. This single shot, multiyear birth control agent prevents animals from entering an estrus cycle through hormonal control. GonaCon™ is effective on both sexes but works best on females. Even without boosters, the vaccine will render females infertile for 1-4 years. This contraceptive is most often administered using a dart fired from a tranquilizer gun. Although GonaCon™ is an effective means of fertility control in pigs, it is currently not registered for use in wild populations.

Problems with the application of any contraceptive include:

- Initial delivery,
- Effectiveness,
- Duration,
- Delivery of subsequent doses,
- Impact on non-target species, and
- Cost.

The greatest challenge in the use of contraceptives for wild pig control will likely be the administration. Though treating individual captive animals is relatively easy, effectively administering contraceptives to large numbers of free-ranging individuals will be difficult. Therefore, contraceptive use as a population control agent is not considered effective.

Poisoning Research

Currently, there are no registered toxicants or poisons available for controlling wild pig populations. However, research to identify and register a toxicant that can be used to combat the overabundant pig population is underway. An effective toxicant could be a powerful and cost effective tool for reducing wild pig numbers. However, the poison must humanely kill wild pigs while having little effect on non-target species.

In recent efforts to reduce the wild pig populations, researchers in Australia have developed a product known as PIGOUT[®], a bait containing Compound 1080, which is highly toxic to mammals. PIGOUT[®] has proven successful in Australia, due in part to the absence of any native midsized generalist mammals. Unfortunately, PIGOUT[®] has proven useless in the United States due to too many non-target species hazards. Also, the product could cause inhumane deaths for pigs. Additionally, the compound can remain in the carcasses, which could cause some

environmental and health concerns. Furthermore, no antidote exists for accidental human exposure.

Concerns surrounding PIGOUT® have led Australian researchers to identify a different toxicant to use against wild pigs. Sodium nitrite could be the solution. This compound seems to cause a quick, humane death, and it is cheap, displays no secondary toxicity, and has an antidote. Currently undergoing trials in Australia, if this toxin proves effective, the commercially available product will be known as HOG-GONE®.

In the United States, application of a poison remains an issue up for debate, largely due to the presence of so many at-risk non-target species. Bears, raccoons, many other mammals, and even some birds could readily ingest an applied toxicant. The effectiveness of the product is also a concern; sodium nitrate, or HOG-GONE® is very salty and distasteful to pigs. In order to mask the salty taste, the toxicant must be specially formulated; otherwise, pigs will avoid it. Landowners that attempt to apply sodium nitrite in its natural form will quickly learn that it has little to no effect on wild pigs. Most importantly, though, it is illegal to apply the toxicant to the environment.

Because there are no registered toxicants for wild pigs, the use of any poisons registered for use against other pest species—i.e. rats, mice, etc.—is illegal and will result in felony charges. All registered toxicants are listed under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, and any use of these toxicants outside their labeled use is a violation of federal law with severe penalties.

**AT THE TIME OF THIS MANUAL'S PRINTING,
POISONING WILD PIGS IN GEORGIA IS ILLEGAL
AND PUNISHABLE BY LAW.**