

the opportunity. Feral hogs are especially fond of acorns and domestic agricultural crops such as corn, milo, rice, wheat, soybeans, peanuts, potatoes, watermelons and cantaloupe.

Feral hogs feed primarily at night and during twilight hours, but will also feed during daylight in cold or wet weather.

Where do feral hogs live?

Feral hogs are found in a variety of habitats from moist pine forests in East Texas to the brush country of South Texas. They prefer bottomlands such as rivers, creeks, and drainages when available. Hogs are generally found in dense vegetation cover often associated with water, but also do well in drought prone environments.

During hot weather, feral hogs enjoy wallowing in wet, muddy areas and are never far from dense protective cover. They will concentrate in areas of food availability, especially where there are nut producing trees or agricultural crops.

Their 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. In general, boars have a larger home range and will also travel greater distances.

Will they harm livestock or wildlife?

Feral hogs compete directly with livestock as well as game and nongame wildlife species for food. However, the main damage caused to livestock and wildlife is indirect destruction of habitat and agriculture commodities. Rooting and trampling activity for food can damage agricultural crops, fields, and livestock feeding and watering facilities. Often wildlife feeders are damaged or destroyed. They also destabilize wetland areas, springs, creeks and tanks by excessive rooting and wallowing. In addition to habitat destruction and alteration, hogs can destroy forestry plantings and damage trees. While not active predators, wild hogs may prey on fawns, young lambs, and kid goats. If the opportunity arises, they may also destroy and consume eggs of ground nesting birds, such as turkeys and quail.

How long do hogs live?

The average life expectancy, under good conditions, in a wild hog population is about four to five years; however, they may live up to eight years.

What about feral hog mortality?

Mortality in feral hog populations is greatest in the young less than three months of age, mainly due to accident, starvation and predation. Adult mortality is largely due to hunting, parasites, disease and tooth deterioration. Predation by mountain lions, coyotes and bobcats is only a minor limiting factor.

Do feral hogs carry disease?

In general, diseases from wild hogs do not pose a significant threat to humans; however, some diseases can be transmitted to livestock and wildlife. It is important to keep all livestock vaccinated, especially where

large feral hog populations are concentrated.

Various diseases of wild hogs include pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, tuberculosis, bubonic plague, tularemia, hog cholera, foot and mouth disease, and anthrax. Internal parasites include kidney worms, stomach worms, round worms and whipworms. Liver flukes and trichinosis are also found in hogs. External parasites include dog ticks, fleas and hog lice.

What is pseudorabies and swine brucellosis?

Pseudorabies, also known as "mad itch" is a swine herpes virus that may affect the respiratory, nervous and reproductive systems. Despite its name, it is not a rabies type disease but derives its name from the symptoms similar to a rabid animal. It is transmitted primarily through breeding but may also to be transmitted through respiratory secretions of the infected animal. Infected adult swine typically develop flu-like symptoms whereas young pigs can have severe respiratory and digestive symptoms and ultimately die. Pseudorabies poses no threat to humans but may be fatal to domestic livestock and pets.

Swine Brucellosis is an infectious, bacterial, reproductive disease that can cause abortion, low conception rates and other problems. It is transmittable to humans, known as undulant fever, and causes flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, aches and pains. It is treatable with specific antibiotics.

How do I keep from contracting diseases?

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recommends all hunters use disposable plastic or rubber gloves when field dressing or cleaning wild swine. Bury or burn the gloves and entrails and then wash your hands with soap and hot water. And finally, make sure the meat is thoroughly cooked.

Is the meat good to eat?

Yes, meat from feral hogs is extremely tasty and much leaner than penraised pork. The meat from older boars may be tougher and rank tasting if not prepared adequately. As with all pork, care should be taken and the meat well cooked. Otherwise, it should be prepared just like market hogs. The slower the meat is cooked, the more tender and tasty it becomes.

What is the difference between a hog and javelina?

Although somewhat similar in appearance and habits, feral hogs and javelinas are not related. While feral hogs are indeed true pigs, javelinas belong to a totally separate family of mammals. Javelinas are smaller, have an unnoticeable tail, only one dew claw on the hind foot, a scent gland near the base of the tail, a grizzled-grayish coat with a white band of hair around the shoulder or "collar," and are more social or herd-like animals.

Although feral hogs and javelinas inhabit the same range in South and Central Texas,

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