

BOX TRAPS FOR FERAL HOGS

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Rising numbers of feral hogs in Texas are damaging water quality, landscapes, gardens, native plant and animal communities, and agricultural production in many areas of the state. To reduce the harm caused by feral hogs, landowners and managers should adopt an integrated management approach using multiple techniques.

Box traps can be used to remove a few feral hogs or to trap in a relatively small area. These traps can serve as a first strike in combination with larger traps and other techniques. However, box traps are not effective for removing many animals at a time.

ADVANTAGES

Because of their size, box traps offer three main advantages:

- ▶ They are relatively easy to move and can be set quickly.
- ▶ They easily fit in the bed of a pickup truck or on a small trailer.
- ▶ They are easily handled and moved, so one person can quickly place traps in areas with fresh hog activity.

DISADVANTAGES

Box traps also pose disadvantages because of the amount of time, energy, and expense they require and the small number of animals they capture:

- ▶ Box traps require pre-baiting, and this can be expensive and time consuming.
- ▶ Many box traps are needed to reduce hog numbers.
- ▶ Box traps can occasionally catch nontarget animals such as deer, calves, and other wildlife and livestock.
- ▶ They may catch only one or two adult pigs. Other approaches are needed to capture larger groups of pigs.

TRAP DESIGN

Box traps come in a variety of designs and shapes. Most are built from livestock panels with steel pipe or angle

iron frames. Because most traps are built by the users, they differ greatly in size, portability, door configuration, flooring, and roofing. In some areas, ready-to-use box traps and different styles of gates can be bought.

A common design is a 4- by 8-foot, heavy-duty cage (Fig. 1). This trap is typically 3 to 4 feet tall, and a top is recommended to keep the hogs from crowding in the corners and climbing out. If the trap is fully enclosed with a top and a floor, the trapper may be able to transport a live hog without removing it from the trap.

However, all box traps—particularly those without floors—require T-posts to anchor them, adding materials that increase the cost and may deter a hog from entering the trap.



Figure 1. Box traps vary in size and construction. A common design includes a 4- by 8-foot cage built with durable materials (A). The best box traps are both effective and low cost. Many box traps are built from materials at hand (B).

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Figure 2. Many drop gates use a pin or similar object attached to a cable to hold the trap gate open (A). The cable can be slid through a conduit to the back of the trap, where it is attached to a trigger system (B). Trigger systems vary in design. (Source: Terry Gallagher)

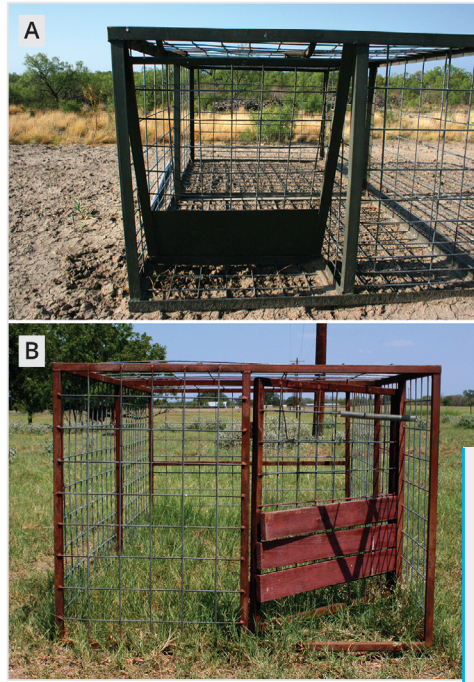


Figure 3. Common box trap designs featuring a lifting (top-hinged) gate (A) or a swing (side-hinged) gate (B).



Figure 4. Box traps with spring-loaded swing gate entries (A and B). This door design allows for additional captures as the hogs push their way into the trap. Box traps with lifting gate entries (C and D). The doors of these two traps have only one panel. Consequently, trapped animals may escape while other hogs moving into the trap lift the door to enter. Box traps with lifting gate entries and multiple panels (E and F). Multiple door panels allow additional hogs to enter the trap while reducing the chance of escape by previously captured hogs.



Figure 5. A landowner inspects a finished box trap deployed in an open area with scattered brush cover. This model has a guillotine gate and is set using a cable and pin system attached to a trigger near the back of the trap. (Source: Terry Gallagher).

GATE DESIGN

The gate should be designed to prevent captured hogs from escaping through the trap entrance. Three gate designs are among those most commonly used for box traps:

- ▶ Sliding drop gates use a trip wire to trigger the door to fall (Fig. 2). One drawback of guillotine gate box traps is that they do not allow additional pigs to enter once the trap has been sprung.
- ▶ Lifting (top-hinged) gates require that a hog use its nose to root or lift open the door.
- ▶ Spring-loaded swing gates use a heavy spring to close the door after the hog pushes its way into the trap (Fig. 3).

Swing and lifting gates offer the advantage of allowing more than one hog to be trapped at a time (Fig. 4). The first captured hog may serve as a lure to attract additional hogs.

However, only one or two adult pigs typically are trapped at a time, because the box trap is small. Sometimes a litter of small pigs may be captured.

TRAP PLACEMENT

Place the box trap near a creek, pond, or other watering location, particularly if these are near bedding or feeding areas. Areas with brush are also good (Fig. 5). Feral hog trails are ideal locations for trap placement. To attract the animals to the bait, set the trap upwind of an area frequented by hogs.

A game camera can help determine hog behavior in the area and identify optimal locations for trap placement.

PRE-BAITING

Trapping feral hogs is a process, not an event. Box traps must be pre-baited to attract feral hogs and accustom them to the traps before they are set. Place the bait inside the trap near the gate, but do not set the trap until the hogs are traveling in and out of the trap.

REGULATIONS

The Texas Animal Health Commission regulates the holding of feral hogs and their transport from the property where they were captured. If you will transport captured hogs to slaughter or a holding facility, follow the appropriate state regulations.

For information on these regulations, see: http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/animal_health/swine/.

SUMMARY

Box traps can be an effective tool as part of a broader feral hog management strategy. Consider using them for removing one or two adult animals at a time.

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