

PLACING AND BAITING FERAL HOG TRAPS

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The increasing numbers of feral hogs in Texas are harming water quality, landscapes, gardens, native plant and animal communities, and agricultural production in many areas of the state. Two keys to success in managing feral hogs are trap placement and pre-baiting.

The landowner or manager must thoroughly understand the foraging behaviors and travel patterns of feral hogs. Control efforts will be more effective if local conditions and feral hog behavior are properly interpreted.

TRAP PLACEMENT

Increase your chances of success by placing traps properly. Place them on or along hog trails linking resources such as food, cover, and water (Fig. 1).

Aerial photographs can show how resources are distributed across the landscape, which will help you place the traps strategically. Photos can be obtained through the U.S. Department of Agriculture or software such as Google Earth.

Before setting a trap, scout the property for hog sign: trails, scat, wallows, hog damage, and rubs, which are areas of mud rubbed on trees, posts, and utility poles. In areas where hogs are abundant, they will create visible paths (Fig. 2A).

Often the easiest form of hog sign to locate and identify is the damage caused by rooting. However, do not place a trap in these sites. If you place the trap where there is ongoing damage by hogs, the bait will compete with a food source that the hogs are already using, and hogs tend to prefer a familiar food source.



Figure 1. Feral hogs traveled across this field from cover to a feeding area. Fence lines where these trails converge are excellent locations for large traps.

A better approach is to place traps along trails to and from these areas. Fence lines are often good places to start. Hogs often create crawls under fences and leave mud or hair on fence wires when passing. If a trail is well established or has significant traffic, it may be heavily eroded.

In some cases, hogs may just be passing through one property to gain access to a feeding area on another property. If so, determine where the hogs are entering the property and set the trap nearby (Fig. 2B). Use landscape features to hide the trap as much as possible, or set the trap near a fence line.

Even if no hog trails are evident, ideal trap locations still exist. Feral hogs often travel along creeks and roads and use cover near overgrown fence lines while traveling. These areas funnel feral hog travel and provide excellent places to set corral traps, particularly if they lead to a feeding area.

Other good sites for corral traps are areas frequented by feral hogs throughout the year, such as watering holes, wallowing areas, and utility poles (Fig. 3).

If possible, place the hog traps upwind from bedding areas used by the animals during the day. This placement will allow the wind to disperse the scent of bait to attract hogs from farther away.

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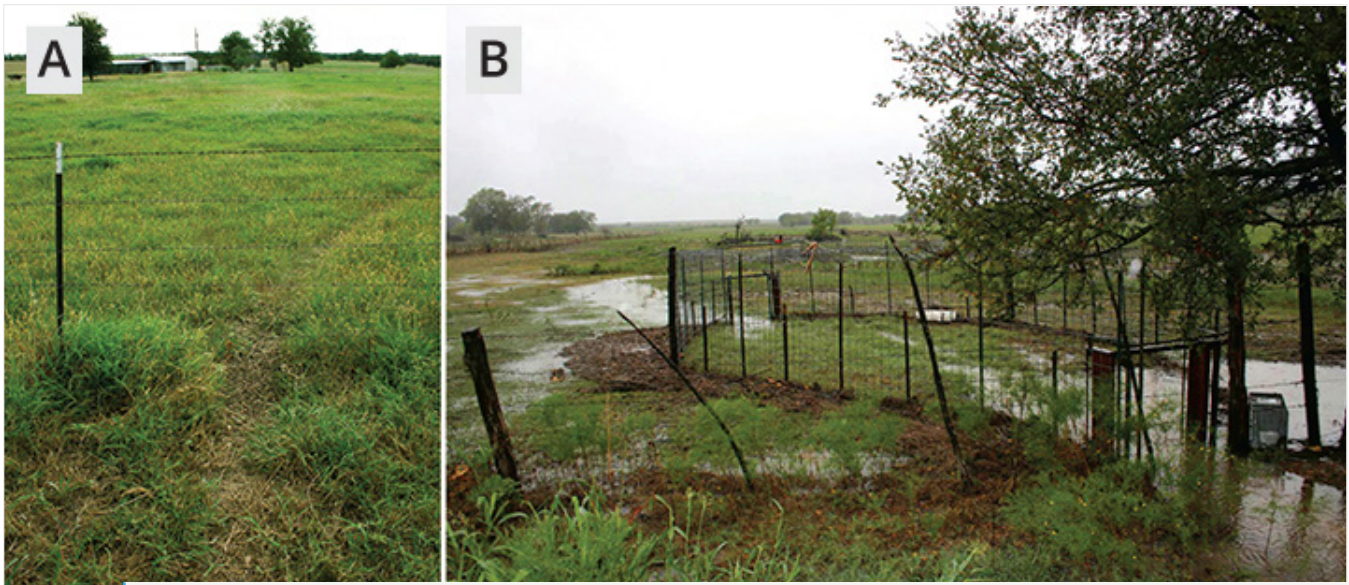


Figure 2. A well-traveled feral hog trail passes under a fence between two properties (A). Here, a large corral trap is an effective option (B). This trap is set along a known feral hog trail and is equipped with saloon-type doors on both ends.

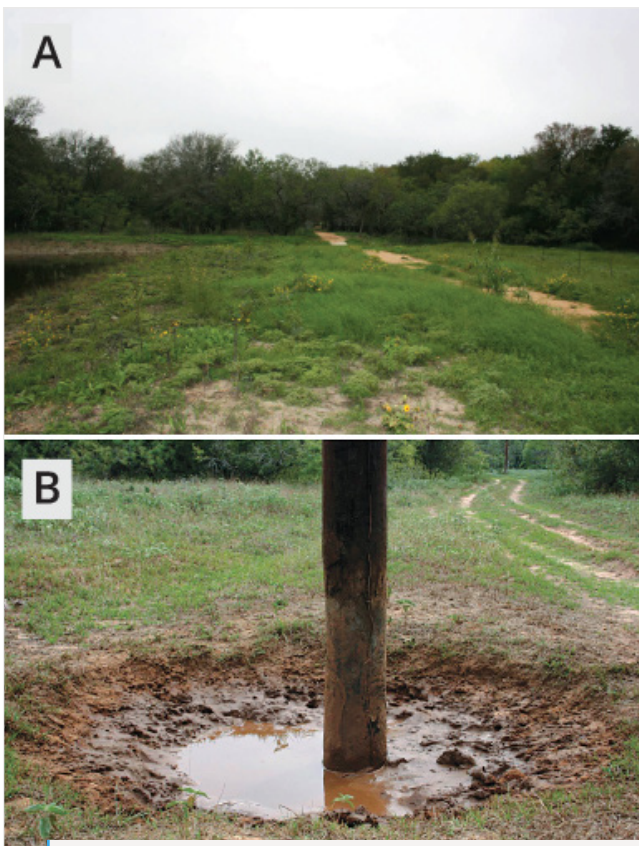


Figure 3. A woodland edge and a road converge with a meandering creek (A). This setup offers an excellent trap site. Feral hogs frequent this utility pole for rubbing and scratching (B), providing another area for a trap nearby.

BAIT TYPES

No toxicants, fertility agents, or biological control chemicals are legally registered for use against feral hogs in the United States. It is illegal to use toxicants with feral hog baits; baiting strategies should lure the animals into corral or box traps.

Feral hogs are omnivores; they eat both plants and animals, and a wide array of baits can be used with success. Common baits include whole corn, livestock cubes, carrion, sour grain, and commercial hog attractant scents.

If corn is used, nontarget animals such as deer may be captured. Soaking the corn in water for 1 week will cause it to sour, and the strong odor will deter other animals from feeding on it.

Regardless of bait type, trapping may be less successful if acorns or other readily available natural foods are abundant.

HOG BAIT RECIPE

Pre-baiting is vital for trap success. If whole corn does not attract feral hogs, use the following recipe developed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources:

- ▶ 150 pounds of corn
- ▶ 8 pounds of sugar
- ▶ 1 packet of yeast



Figure 4. A game camera is useful for monitoring feral hog activity near the site of a trap (A). Photographs can indicate the number of hogs in the area and the best time to set the trap. Pre-baiting increases the probability of catching a large number of hogs. Start by placing bait outside and through the gate opening of the trap (B). Once the decision to set the trap is made, place bait near the trigger mechanism (C).

- ▶ 4 or 5 packets of grape, strawberry, or raspberry flavored gelatin or drink powder

Place the corn in a 40 gallon metal trash can and fill it with water to 3 to 4 inches above the corn. Mix in all the other ingredients.

Place the trash can in the sun with the lid secured. Stir it with a shovel or paddle daily for 10 to 14 days.

Take care not to spill the product on your clothes. Ladle the bait in and around the trap and replenish it as needed.

OTHER BAITS

- ▶ Corn fermented in beer
- ▶ Bread fermented in water
- ▶ Dry dog food
- ▶ Ripe fruit
- ▶ Commercially available baits and scents
- ▶ Flour

PRE-BAITING

For all feral hog traps, it is critical to pre-bait—that is, to place bait in the trap for a period before setting the trap. Pre-baiting will attract animals and accustom them to entering the trap itself.

1. Start by placing bait near the opening and inside the trap (Fig. 4B).
2. As the hogs begin to routinely enter the trap, continue pre-baiting inside the trap for a few more days to ensure the entire sounder (group) is comfortable entering the trap.

3. A game camera is useful for monitoring the number of hogs entering the trap, and it provides information on the best time to set the trap (Fig. 4A).
4. When the trap is ready to be set, place bait all the way back to the trigger. Do not scatter bait directly along the trip wire, as this may cause the hogs to trigger the gate before all of the animals have entered the trap (Fig. 4C).

TRAPPING TIPS

- ▶ Pre-bait traps to increase your chances of success.
- ▶ Build or use large traps; the bigger the better.
- ▶ Avoid leaving human scent in and around traps.
- ▶ If possible, check the traps from a distance.
- ▶ Vary the baits. Hog preferences may change over the course of the year.
- ▶ Refresh the baits by spraying them every 2 days with a strawberry gelatin/water mix in a pump sprayer.
- ▶ Share gates with your neighbors. Install the gate only after the hogs respond to pre-baiting.
- ▶ Trapping feral hogs is a process, not a single event. Be persistent!

STATE REGULATIONS

The Texas Animal Health Commission regulates the holding and transportation of feral hogs from the property where they were captured. Follow the appropriate regulations if you plan to transport captured hogs to a holding facility or to slaughter.

For more information on these regulations, visit https://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/swine/.

SUMMARY

To maximize the likelihood of capturing feral hogs, choose the right trap location and implement an effective pre-baiting strategy.

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