

## 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge

### Abstract

Estimates indicate that the population of feral hogs may exceed 500,000 in Florida. They have proven difficult to manage. Land managers in Florida reported that feral hogs were a significant problem that needed to be addressed. The UF/IFAS St. Lucie County Cooperative Extension conducted the 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge to help land managers reduce feral hog populations in a cost-effective manner. This activity was conducted in 2013 and 2014 and resulted in the removal of one hundred and twenty three feral hogs weighing 18, 393 lbs. from the Florida environment.

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## Introduction

The UF/IFAS St Lucie County Cooperative Extension addressed the feral hog management problem in South Florida through the 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge.

Feral hogs, also called wild hogs, wild boar, and wild pigs, are animals having escaped domestication to become wild. They are the same genus and species as barnyard pigs (*Sus scrofa*). Feral hogs are common in Florida, with a population estimated to be in excess of 500,000 (Guiliano, 2010). The state has the second largest population of feral hogs following Texas. At least 35 states and Canadian provinces have feral hogs in the environment. Damage natural area land managers often associate with feral hogs are wallowing, aggression, tusking of vegetation, and rooting (Gioeli, 2012).

## The Struggle to Address Feral Hog Problems in South East Florida

A feral hog management practices inventory was conducted to determine the nature of the problems experienced by Florida's natural area land managers. A SurveyMonkey survey was distributed via email through networks such as the Florida Invasive Species Partnership and feral hog trappers. Results were published in the *2012 Proceedings of the Florida State Horticulture Society* (Gioeli, 2012). Of the 87 natural area land managers who responded to the survey, 70% (60/87) responded that they were managing public lands, while 30% (26/87) were managing private lands. Eighty-two percent (71/87) of the respondents were managing properties larger than 200 acres, while 2.3% (2/87) managed 151-200 acres, 1.1% (1/87) managed 101-150 acres, 4.6% (4/87) managed 51-100 acres, and 10.3% (9/87) managed 50 acres or less. All respondents indicated that rooting was the most frequent feral hog damage they experienced, followed by wallowing at 70% (61/87). Other problems included tusking of woody trees and shrubs at 26% (23/87) and aggression toward humans and domestic animals at 7% (6/87). Overall, surveyed land managers perceived feral hogs as a significant nuisance, and they continued to struggle with damage deemed to be moderate to severe in scope.

The study was conducted to determine the impacts of feral hogs from the natural areas land management perspective. However, a review of literature on the economic impacts of other nuisance wildlife reveal additional issues that could be explored in future expanded studies. For example, an article on the negative economic impacts of nuisance deer in the northeastern United States revealed that deer-vehicle collisions, agricultural crop depredation, and residential landscape destruction had a negative economic impact that reached over \$390 million in 2000 (Drake, Paulin, Curtis, Decker, & San Julian, 2005). Similarly, feral hogs are hit by cars throughout Florida, destroy landscapes, and have agricultural impacts that result in negative economic consequences for many Floridians. There is a need for additional research on the economic impacts of feral hogs in Florida.

### 4-H Involvement

Extension agents collaborated with 4-H club leaders on the 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge. This competitive event was conducted for the first time in October 2013 with a goal of hunting feral hogs from the Florida landscape. Teams were allowed to enter their two heaviest feral hog carcasses for weigh-in. Eleven teams weighed in a total of 22 feral hog carcasses. The combined weight of the hog carcasses was 3,463 lbs. Live feral hogs were not permitted at weigh in.

The 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge was continued and expanded in 2014. Rules were posted online (Figure 1). A total of 24 hunting teams participated. A new category, "Most Killed," was added to encourage hunting teams to kill and record more than two feral hogs. The official tally of feral hogs killed in the September 2014 Challenge totaled 101 animals weighing 14,930 lbs. (7.465 tons).

#### Figure 1.

2014 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge Rules

**SOUTHERN SWINES 4-H CLUB  
2014 HOG CHALLENGE RULES**

1. All state and federal laws and regulations will be observed. Any infraction of these laws and regulations will result in disqualification of the team. It is the responsibility of the entrants to be familiar with these laws, regulations, and event rules.
2. Registration and payments **must be submitted by Thursday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 5 p.m.** All registrations are non-refundable.
3. Tournament hours: Friday, Sept 12<sup>th</sup>, 4 p.m. to Saturday Sept 13<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m. The scales will open at 4 p.m. on Saturday at the St. Lucie Co. Fairgrounds. All entrants must be in line to be weighed by 5:30 p.m. No hogs will be allowed to enter after this time.
4. Teams may consist of up to three (3) people. Team Captain must be at least 18 years old. You cannot be a member of multiple teams. Team members are the only ones permitted to actively participate in the hunt.
5. **Team Captain for top three teams will be subject to a polygraph test. Any Team Captain with a blood alcohol content high enough to affect the outcome of the polygraph test will be disqualified by tournament committee.** If team captain is disqualified, another member of the team will need to take the polygraph test. That individual must be at least 18 years old. If there is no one else on the team of legal age, the entire team will be disqualified. Failure or refusal of a polygraph test will result in immediate disqualification of the team. Contestants found to be cheating, attempting to cheat or in violation of any Florida game laws will cause disqualification of the entire team and forfeiture of any and all entry fees. The perpetrator and/or team may also be banned from future contests.
6. All hog hunting must be done in Florida. Hunters are allowed to hunt any area they have permission to hunt.
7. Hunters who hunt on private land do not need a Florida-Hunting License
8. **NO LIVE HOGS WILL BE PERMITTED** Hogs must be dead before entering the fairgrounds and **MUST** be weighed **DEAD**
9. Hogs may be killed by Bow, Gun, Spear or Knife.
10. Bows, Saws or Bars are all fair game for the tournament.
11. No mutilated hogs and no domesticated hogs. This rule is to be determined by the tournament committee.
12. Hogs must have never been knowingly penned. No high fence, road kill, penned or purchased hogs will be accepted.
13. Any dogs at the weigh-in must remain secured in dog box with appropriate care, water, and shade. All guns, bows or other weapons must be secured in a locked vehicle while at the fairgrounds.
14. Each team is eligible for the Grand Prize (Two heaviest hogs), Single Heaviest Hog and Most Hogs Killed.
  - A. Grand prize: Two hogs - each team will be allowed to weigh up to two hogs. The team with the heaviest combined hog weight for their two heaviest hog wins. Winners are determined by the hog's weight only.
  - B. Single Heaviest Hog -- each team will be allowed to weigh one hog. Winners are determined by the hog's weight only.
  - C. Highest Number of Feral Hogs Killed -- no size limit. The total number of feral hogs killed during the event will be recorded at the weigh-in station.
15. In the event of a tie, the prize money for that place and the next place will be split between the teams tied for that place. For example, if two teams tie for first place, the two teams will split the prize money in half for 1st & 2nd place. If there is a tie for 2nd place, the two teams will split the prize money for 2nd & 3rd place. If there is a tie for 3rd place, the teams will split the amount awarded to third place.
16. **Cutter entrants:** Separate entry -- Each team pre-registered (by 5 p.m. on 9/11) in the Cutter Contest will be allowed to measure one hog's longest tooth. The longest tooth wins.
17. Winners will be determined at the close of the tournament. The committee will decide on all ties and disqualifications.
18. Awards will be handed out during the Awards Dinner at the St. Lucie County Fairgrounds after the weigh in. Dinner will begin at approximately 6:30 p.m. Additional dinner tickets may be purchased by contacting [trish@southswines.org](mailto:trish@southswines.org).
19. Any protest or disputes must be made within 30 minutes of weigh-in to weigh masters must be in writing and be accompanied by a \$100 fee.
20. Anyone behaving in an un-sportsman like or disruptive manner during the weigh-in or awards dinner will be turned over to Law Enforcement and banned from future events.
21. Official statements made prior to start time take precedence over printed material.

By signing below I state that I have read and understand all of the rules of the 2014 Hog Challenge. I understand that it is my responsibility to obey and follow all rules, State and Federal laws during hunting hours. In consideration of the acceptance of my registration for this event, I hereby assume all risk associated with my participation and do hereby release any and all event sponsors and volunteers including any and all their officers, agents, employees, members, directors, sponsors, and organizers of all responsibility and blame for any injury, harm, loss or inconvenience to myself and/or for the named participant(s) identified as a part of my team as a result of participation in any part of the Southern Swine Hog Challenge.

Team Captain (Name Printed) \_\_\_\_\_ Team Captain (Signature) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please remember, this is a 4-H fundraiser. Let's have fun and thanks for your support.

The rules of the Challenge were designed to make it clear to participants that safety and legal requirements were priorities. Due to potential controversy with animal rights activists and because of the unconventional nature of this contest, item number one in the rules specifies that all state and federal laws must be followed. Bows, guns, spears, and knives were permitted to humanely dispatch the feral hogs. Alcohol was not permitted on site, and team members were informed in advance that they would be subjected to polygraph if alcohol was suspected. Team members were required to be adults over the age of 18. Live feral hogs were not permitted into this contest to eliminate the likelihood that 4-H'ers could be harmed by these potentially dangerous animals. Compliance with these rules resulted in a safe and productive event with no controversy or accusations of illegal activity.

When examining the role of the 4-H Southern Swines Club, it is apparent they were compatible with the goal of managing feral hogs and were perfectly positioned to conduct the 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge. Rogers describes "compatibility" as the degree to which an innovation is consistent with existing values and past experiences of the adopters (Rogers, 1963). Their 4-H club members have experience raising domesticated swine for show in the fair. Their values align perfectly as they understand the need to manage feral hogs to reduce the likelihood of disease transmission from feral hogs to their domesticated breeds.

In total, 4-H volunteers logged 460 hours for the 2014 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge resulting in a value of \$9,770.40. "Calculation of economic value of trained volunteers' contribution to extension programs: According to 2013 Florida data from the Independent Sector ([http://independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time)), the estimated dollar value of a volunteer hour is \$21.24. In Extension, trained volunteers are contributing to Extension program by dedicating their time, skills, talents, and expertise under supervision or guidance by faculty."

## Conclusions

Overall, the 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge in St Lucie County, FL has been a successful innovative program. Extension agents from other Florida counties have expressed an interest in conducting their own feral hog challenges. The experience and values of the members of the 4-H clubs throughout Florida make them well-positioned to conduct these hunting challenges and make a significant impact on feral hogs throughout the state. In fact, these clubs could be well-positioned to address feral hog management problems by hosting feral hog challenges in the 35 states and Canadian provinces where the hogs are found. Fortunately for St Lucie County, the 4-H Southern Swines Feral Hog Challenge resulted in the removal from the environment of 123 nuisance feral hogs weighing a combined 18,393 lbs. in the first 2 years since its inception. The St Lucie County Extension office is available to serve as a resource for other Extension agents struggling with feral hog management issues who discover our feral hog challenge through the *Journal of Extension* and other outreach efforts.

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