

# Feral Hogs Running Wild Throughout Oklahoma

by **SEAN HUBBARD,**  
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While they are not native to the United States, feral hogs have made Oklahoma their home, and farmers and ranchers have the damage on their property to prove it.

Much like white-tailed deer, hogs are quite secretive, making population estimates difficult. However, the Noble Foundation initiated a survey in 2007, which was conducted by Oklahoma State University (OSU) Cooperative Extension, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife

Conservation, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services.

The survey estimated the population at approximately 500,000 or less, with a presence in all 77 Oklahoma counties.

There are several indicators that prove the existence of hogs on your property, said Dwayne Elmore, OSU Extension wildlife specialist. "They have tracks that are similar to deer, but more rounded," he said.

Rooting is the most evident footprint left by hogs, however. In softer soils, the rooted areas can be up to 3 feet deep, leaving large wallows. They root around a lot looking for food, usually in broad areas leaving massive soil disturbances, loss of plant material and erosion problems. The hogs then rub on trees, removing bark and leaving mud plastered to tree trunks a few feet off the ground.

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Counties in the southeast portion of the state have bigger population numbers, but feral hogs have been leaving destruction in their paths throughout Oklahoma.

"They are very difficult to control," said Elmore. "Exclusion is almost never practical, leaving lethal control as the best option."

Hog hunters enjoy the sport, while farmers cringe at the thought of their crops being ravaged by the intruders.

Picking off a hog or two at a time through hunting may make landowners feel like they are taking care of the problem; however, many times the hogs just stop moving during the day and do their damage at night. Elmore said trapping entire groups at a time is much more effective.

"To catch an entire group, consisting anywhere from five to 20 animals, we want to construct a large, round trap," Elmore said. "If there are corners, large pigs will pile up and some will escape."

An effective way of constructing a trap like this is with the use of cattle panels, placed in a circular fashion with T-posts tightly securing them to the ground.

"They will root under the panels, so make sure they are strongly secured," he said. "You want to prebait the trap so the hogs get used to coming in before setting it."

The Noble Foundation has information available online at [noble.org](http://noble.org), which includes various traps and methods of trap construction.



**Editor's Note:** Sean Hubbard is communications specialist with OSU Agricultural Communications Services, which provided this article.